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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET"

ETC. ETC. ETC.

M. E. Braddon

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

M. E. Braddon

Hx 1 57

LONDON
JOHN MAXWELL AND COMPANY
122 FLEET STREET
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1865

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TO

OCTAVE DELEPIERRE, F.S.A. LL.D.

AND HIS CHARMING WIFE

CHARLOTTE

THIS STORY IS INSCRIBED

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

MANY PLEASANT HOURS PASSED WITH THEM

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cept the clanking of hammers and banging of timber and jingling of iron in the busy dock-yard; with no better enjoyment to hope for than a couple of days' quail-shooting or kangaroo-hunting in the interior?

"If I'd been Desperate Bill the Burglar, or Slippery Steeve the Smasher, I couldn't be *much* worse off," he muttered, as he gave up the unmanageable cigar, and went across the room to a table, upon which there were some tobacco-jars and meerschaum pipes.—"Now then, Tredethlyn, are those boots ready?"

This question was addressed to an invisible some one, whose low whistling of a jovial Irish air was audible from the adjoining room.

"Yes, captain," answered a cheery voice—the whistler had broken off in the middle of the "wild sweet briery fence that around the flowers of Erin dwells,"—"Yes, captain, quite ready."

"That's another aggravation," exclaimed Mr. Lowther,—"the fellow will call me captain; as if it wash't an underhand way of reminding me that

for a poor devil like me there's no chance of promotion."

"But you see you *are* captain here, Mr. Lowther," said the whistler, emerging from the adjoining chamber with a pair of newly-blacked Wellingtons in his hand; "you're captain, major, colonel, general, and field-marshal, all in one, here, with seventy men under your control, and any amount of convicts to look after."

"If there's one thing in the world that's more excruciating than another, it's that fellow's cheerfulness," cried Mr. Lowther. "I can fancy the feelings of an elegant young French marquis of the *vieille roche*, a scion of the Mortemars or Birons, buried alive in an underground cell in the Bastille, with a lively commoner for his companion — a cheerful *bourgeois*, who pretended to make light of his situation, and eat his mouldy bread with a relish.—Now then, Tredethlyn, where are the boot-hooks? That fellow always forgets something."

"That fellow," otherwise Francis Tredethlyn, was a tall, stalwart private soldier, of some seven-

and-twenty years of age, who had been honoured by an appointment to the post of valet and butler to Ensign Harcourt Lowther.

If the stalwart soldier had not been blest with one of those imperturbable Mark-Tapley-like tempers, which resemble the patent elliptic springs of a crack coachbuilder's carriage, and can convey the traveller unjolted and uninjured over the roughest roads in the journey of life, he might have found his position as valet, major-domo, and occasional confidant to Harcourt Lowther, far from the pleasantest berth to be had in this great tempest-tossed vessel which we call the world. But Francis Tredethlyn's serenity of disposition was proof against the most wearisome burden a man is ever called upon to bear—the companionship of a discontented fellow-creature, and all the variable moods, from a feverish cynical kind of gaiety to a dreary and ill-tempered gravity, which were engendered out of that perpetual discontent.

But Frank Tredethlyn bore it all cheerfully; with a manly, open-hearted cheerfulness that had no taint of sycophancy. If the young ensign

wanted to talk to him, well and good — he was ready and willing to talk about any thing or every thing; but he had his own sentiments upon most subjects, which sentiments were of a very fast colour, and did not take any reflected hue from Mr. Lowther's aristocratic opinions.

It is not to be supposed that Francis Tredethlyn, private soldier and valet, had any claims to intellectual equality with his master. The private wrote a fair commercial hand, very bold and big and resolute-looking; could read aloud without stumbling ignominiously over the long words; could cast up accounts; and, looking back at the history of the universal past, saw glimmering faintly over a sea of darkness and oblivion such beacon-lights as a Norman invasion; a solemn meeting on the flat turf of Runnymede; a Reformation, with a good deal of martyr-burning and head-chopping attendant thereupon; a fiery hook-nosed Dutch liberator, a Jacobite rebellion, and a Reform Bill. Beyond these limits the attainments of Mr. Tredethlyn did not extend; and the ensign, when grumbling at the general

discomfort of his life, was apt to say that it was a hard thing to be flung for companionship on a fellow who was nothing but a boor and a clod.

Mr. Lowther treated his valet very much as a spoiled child treats her doll; sometimes it pleased him to be monstrously cordial and familiar with his attendant, while at another time he held Francis aloof by a haughty reserve of manner, beyond which barrier the other made no effort to penetrate.

"The fellow does possess that merit," Harcourt Lowther said sometimes, "he knows how to keep his place."

The fact of the matter is, that the valet was infinitely less dependent upon his master's companionship than his master upon his. There were a hundred ways in which Francis Tredethlyn could amuse himself; and there was not a cloud in the sky, a wave of the sea, a leaf in the garden, out of which he could not take some scrap of pleasure, and which had not a deeper and truer meaning for him than for the idle young officer who lay yawning upon his narrow couch with

his feet in the air, and nothing better to do than to admire the shape of his boots, obtained on credit from a confiding West-end tradesman. Francis had that wide sympathy with his fellow-creatures which is a special attribute of some men; and was on the friendliest possible terms with the two convict gardeners, both of whom had achieved some renown as the most incorrigible and execrable specimens of the criminal class. Every dog in the little settlement fawned upon Frank Tredethlyn, and ran to rub its head against his knees, and slaver his hand with its flapping tongue. He had made a kennel for two or three of these canine acquaintances in a shady corner of the big garden, much to the disgust and annoyance of the ensign, who only cared for such dogs as are calculated to assist the sports of their lord and master. Staghounds and beagles, foxhounds and harriers, setters, pointers, and retrievers, clever ratting Scotch terriers, well-bred and savage bulls, even little short-eared toy terriers, or fawn-coloured and black-muzzled pugs, were all very well placed in the scheme of creation:

but Mr. Lowther could find no explanation for the existence of those mongrel creatures who seem to have nothing to do in the world but to attach themselves with slavish devotion to some brutal master, or to lie in the most disreputable courts and alleys of a city in hot weather and catch flies.

But, somehow or other, Francis Tredethlyn seemed generally to do pretty much as he liked, in spite of military despotism and Mr. Harcourt Lowther. The dogs were unmolested in their shady corner; and the ensign was so good as to say that a little aviary of wicker-work and wire, which Tredethlyn constructed in his leisure hours, and duly filled with tiny feathered inhabitants, that kept up a faint twittering in the sunshine, was an improvement to the cottage. Francis was very handy, and could do wonders with a hammer and a handful of tin tacks; and was, indeed, altogether a great acquisition to his master, as Mr. Corbett, the police magistrate, sometimes remarked to Harcourt Lowther.

"Yes," Harcourt answered, indifferently,

"the fellow is a cut above most of his class. He is a Cornishman, it seems, and the son of a small farmer in that land of Tre, Pol, and Pen; and he tells me that he has an old miser uncle who is supposed to be preternaturally rich. Egad! I wish I had such an uncle! All my uncles are misers for the matter of that; but then, unluckily, the poor devils are misers because they're preternaturally poor."

Mr. Lowther stood before the little looking-glass, in the sunny window, admiring himself, while Francis Tredethlyn helped him on with his coat. He was going to dine with Mr. Corbett the magistrate, and to spend the evening in the society of Miss Corbett, who had come out to the colony with the idea that general officers and wealthy judges would be waiting on the shore ready to conduct her straight from the place of debarcation to the hymeneal altar, and had been a little soured by the disenchantment which had too surely followed her arrival. She was a gushing damsel of thirty-five, very tall and square, and of a pre-

vailing drab colour; and she played tremendous variations of shrill Scottish melodies on a piano which had been warranted to preserve its purity of tone in any climate, but upon which the nearest thing to an harmonious octave was a wild stretch of thirteen notes. Mr. Lowther must have been very low in the world when he had nothing better to do than to sit by Miss Corbett's piano while she banged and rattled at the numerous disguises under which "Kinloch of Kinloch" appeared in a fantasia of twelve pages, now prancing jantily in triplets, now rushing up and down the piano in chromatic scales, now scampering wildly in double arpeggios, now banging himself out of all knowledge in common chords, or wailing dismally in a hideous minor. Fate had done its worst for Ensign Lowther when he had no better amusement than to lounge by the side of that ill-used old instrument, staring reflectively at the thin places on the top of Miss Corbett's drab-coloured head.

Harcourt Lowther stood before the glass admiring his handsome face, while his valet brushed

the collar of his coat. Well, he had a right to admire himself! If Providence had treated him badly, capricious Mother Nature, who, like any other frivolous-minded parent, elects her prime favourites without rhyme or reason, had been very bountiful to him in the matter of an aquiline nose, a finely-modelled mouth and chin, and deep womanish blue eyes, with a shimmer of gold on their lashes. No one could deny Mr. Lowther's claim to be considered a remarkably handsome man, an elegant young man, a very agreeable and accomplished gentleman. The world, of course, had nothing to do with that rougher edge of the ensign's character which he turned to his valet Francis Tredethlyn in his cottage at Port Arthur.

He went out presently, swinging his thin cane, and whistling all the triplets and cadences of an elaborate *scena;* he was an amateur musician and an amateur artist, playing more or less upon two or three different instruments, and painting more or less in half-a-dozen different styles. He could ride across country to the astonishment of burly Leicestershire squires, who were inclined to

think contemptuously of his small waist and pretty blue eyes, his amber-tinted, jockey-club perfumed whiskers, trim tops, and unstained "pink." He was a good shot, and long ago at Harrow had been renowned as a cricketer. He spoke three or four modern languages, and had that dim recollection of his classic studies which is sufficient for a man of the world who knows how to make much out of little. He was altogether a very accomplished gentleman; but with him intellectual pursuits were a means rather than an end, and he took very little pleasure in the society of books or bookmen. He wanted to be in the world, foremost in the perpetual strife, amid the crash of drums and trumpets, the roaring of cannon, and glitter of emblazoned standards flaunting gallantly in the wind. He wanted to be one of the conquerors in the universal tournament, and to ride up to the Queen of Beauty flushed and triumphant after the strife, to be admired and caressed. This is why the inaction of his present existence was so utterly intolerable to him. He had a supreme belief in himself, and in the indisputable nature

of his right to the best and brightest amongst earth's prizes. The time must be indeed out of joint in which there was nothing better for such as he than a dreary convict settlement in the Tasmanian peninsula.

Unluckily, the time *was* out of joint. Robert Lowther, of Lowther Hall, Hampshire, had given his younger son an aristocratic name and a gentlemanly education; and then, having nothing more to bestow upon him, had been forced to leave the lad to fish for himself in the troubled waters of life. The prospects of the junior had always been more or less sacrificed to those of the senior of Robert Lowther's two sons, and Harcourt bore a hearty grudge against his father and his brother on this account. Plainly told that he was to expect no more assistance from the parent purse, the young man had elected to become a barrister; but after a three years' course of reading, in which the cultivation of light literature and modern languages was diversified by a slight sprinkling of legal study, he had grown heartily sick of his shabbily-furnished third floor

in Hare Court, Temple, and had gladly accepted the price of a commission in one of her Majesty's light infantry regiments from an affectionate maiden aunt, believing that the regiment would be speedily under orders for India, where glory and loot no doubt awaited a dashing young soldier with a very high opinion of his own merits.

Unhappily for Mr. Lowther the regiment did not go to India; but he and his captain, with a detachment of seventy rank and file, embarked at Deptford on a misty morning in October, in charge of 450 convicts bound for Hobart Town. At the time of which I write the ensign had been nearly a twelvemonth in Van Diemen's Land, and before him lay the prospect of another dreary year which must elapse before there was much chance of his seeing a change of quarters. There are some people who take their troubles with a cheerful countenance, and make the best of a bad bargain; but Mr. Lowther was not one of them. He had begun to grumble before the convict ship left Deptford; and he had gone on complaining, with

very little intermission, until to-day, and was likely so to continue until the end of the chapter. Napoleon at St. Helena could scarcely have felt his exile more keenly; nor could that fallen hero have more bitterly resented the injustice of his fate than Harcourt Osborne Lowther, who believed that there must be something radically wrong in a universe in which there was no provision of 40,000*l.* or so a year for an elegant young man with a perfect aquiline nose, a clear ringing touch upon the piano, a trumpet tone on the flute, a talent for taking pen-and-ink portraits that were equal to any thing of Count D'Orsay's, and an irreproachable taste in waistcoats.

He went out now in very tolerable spirits; first, because he had worked himself into a good temper by grumbling to himself and Tredethlyn all day; secondly, because he was going to have a good dinner and some rare old tawny port, which was the boast of Mr. Corbett the magistrate; and thirdly, because he was going to be admired; and in a Tasmanian settlement even the worship of a young lady with bony fingers

which was a shed-like chamber at the back of the cottage, and a kind of compromise between a dressing-room and a washhouse. Here Mr. Tredethlyn made his toilet, which consisted of a rapid plunge of his head and throat into a tub of cold water, some brisk operations with a cake of yellow soap, accompanied by sputtering and whizzing noises of an alarming character, a little fierce rubbing down with a coarse towel, and the smart application of a stiff and implacable-looking hair-brush. When this was done, Francis Tredethlyn put on his jacket, and went out into the garden to smoke his pipe and converse with the convicts.

Now that the gifts of nature had been enhanced by the adornments of art, the ensign's valet was by no means a bad-looking fellow. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular in build as a modern Hercules. His closely-cut black hair revealed the outline of a well-shaped head well placed upon his shoulders. Under his dark, almost gipsy-brown skin, was a rich crimson glow, which deepened or faded under the influence of any powerful emotion. His nose was

straight, but rather short, and of no particular type; but a sculptor would have told you there was a special beauty about the curve of his full open nostrils, and Honoré de Balzac would have informed you that a man with that kind of nostril is generally good for something in this world. His forehead was low, stronger in the perceptive than in the reflective organs; his eyes were of a clear gray, darkened by the shadow of thick black lashes. He was a handsome soldier; he would have made a handsome gladiator in the old Roman days; a noble-looking brigand, in the days when brigands were chivalrous; a dashing highwayman, in the age when Claude Duval rode gaily to his death on Tyburn tree; a glorious sporting farmer down in Leicestershire to-day; but no power upon this earth could have transformed him into an elegant West-end lounger, an accomplished dawdler in fashionable drawing-rooms, or a "gentleman" in the modern acceptation of the word.

He went out into the garden now, to smoke his pipe of bird's-eye and talk to the convict

gardeners, who brightened at his approach, and deliberately planted themselves in a convenient position upon their spades, in order to converse with him. I am sorry to say that he was as much at home in their society as if they had been the most estimable of mankind, and that he encouraged them to talk freely of their burglarious experiences in the Old World. Was there not a smack of brigandage and adventure in those experiences, and even a dash of chivalry, according to the two men's own showing? for they told stories of encounters in which they shone out quite with heroic lustre from their rooted objection to cut an elderly lady's throat, and their gallant bearing towards a high-minded young damsel who had led them from room to room in her father's mansion, and had pointed with her own fair hands to the whereabouts of the family valuables. Francis Tredethlyn sat upon the trunk of a fallen acacia, watching the lazy clouds in the still evening sky, and smoking his pipe, long after the two convicts had struck work and retired to their own quarters. He sat smoking and musing;

thinking, as I suppose a man so banished must think, of that other far-away world which he had left behind him; and which it seemed to him sometimes, in such still moments as these, that he should never see again.

"So far away, so very far away!" he mused. "I wonder how the little village street upon the hill is looking now? It's winter-time now there, or getting towards winter-time anyhow. I can fancy it of an evening, with the lights twinkling in the low shop-windows, the big castle-gate frowning down upon the poor little street; the churchyard, where Susy and I have played, all dark and lonesome in the winter night; and Susy herself—pretty little dark-eyed Susy—sitting by the hearth in the big kitchen at Tredethlyn, stitch, stitch, stitch, while the old man nods and snores over his newspaper. Poor little Susy, what a hard life it is for her! and the old man as rich as that king of somewhere—Crœsus, don't they call him?—if his neighbours are to be believed. Poor little Susy! is she fond of me, I wonder! and will she be pleased to marry me, if ever I'm able to go

back, and say, 'Susy, the best I could do, after running away and 'listing, was to save up money to buy my discharge, so that I might come home again to claim the old promise—for better for worse, for richer or poorer'? We couldn't well be poorer than we should be just at first; for, of course, the old chap would turn rusty, and cut Susy off with a shilling; but who cares for that?" thought Francis Tredethlyn, snapping his fingers in the independence of his spirit. "If Susy loves me, and I love Susy, and we're both young and strong and industrious, what's to prevent us getting on in the world, without any body's money to help us?"

The soldier smoked another pipe in a dreamy roverie, in which his thoughts still hovered about one familiar spot in his native country—a long, low, stone-built farmhouse, standing alone upon a broad plateau of bare moorland, very dreary of aspect in winter,—a dismal, ghastly-looking homestead, in which the ornamental had been sacrificed to the useful,—a gaunt, naked-looking dwelling-place, upon whose decoration or improvement a

ten-pound note had not been expended within the memory of man,—a house which had gone down through three generations of close-fisted, cross-grained owners, and which had grown uglier and drearier under the rule of each generation.

This was the habitation which stood as clearly out against the vague background of Francis Tredethlyn's dreams as if it had been palpably present upon the rising ground on the other side of the bay. This was the house; and in the low narrow doorway, fronting the desolate expanse of stunted brown grass, the soldier saw the slender figure of a girl—a girl with dark, gentle eyes, and a quaker-like dress of coarse brown stuff,—a girl who stood with her hand shading her eyes, looking at the distant figure of an old man plodding homeward in the winter twilight. He had so often seen her thus, that it was only natural the picture of her should present itself to his mind to-night, as his thoughts wandered homeward. He was so far away from this girl and the familiar place in which she lived, that it seemed almost impossible to him that he could ever see her again, or tread

the well-known pathways along which he had so often walked by her side. He thought of her almost as the dead may think of the living—if they do think of us.

"Poor little Susy! I wonder whether she loved me—whether she loves me still? I wasn't like some of your lovers,—I wasn't one of your desperate fellows. I had no hot fits, or cold fits, or jealous fits, or such-like, and there are some folks that might say I was never in love at all. But I was very fond of Susy—poor little tender-hearted Susy! I used to think of her, somehow, as if she had been my little sister. I think of her like that now."

CHAPTER III.

TIDINGS OF HOME.

It was late when Mr. Lowther came home from his friend the magistrate's. The faint flush that lighted up his face, and the unwonted lustre of his eyes, bore testimony to the merits of Mr. Corbett's tawny port. All Sandemann's choicest vintages would not have tempted Harcourt Lowther to sit listening to a prosy old magistrate's civil-service experiences, in Europe; but on this side of the world a bottle of good wine and a tolerably civilised companion were not entirely to be despised. The ensign was in a very good temper when he came into the little parlour, where a swinging lamp burned brightly, and where a tobacco-jar, a meerschaum, a case-bottle of Schiedam, a tumbler, and a jug of water, were set upon the table ready for the master of the domain.

Mr. Lowther was in excellent temper, and inclined to be especially civil to his valet.

"No Schiedam to-night, Tredethlyn," he said, throwing himself into the wicker easy-chair, and stretching his feet upon a smaller chair that stood opposite to him; "I've had a little too much of that old fellow's port. Devilish good stuff it is too, if it hadn't a tendency to spoil a man's complexion, and concentrate itself in his nose. I'll take a pipe, though. Just give me a light, will you, Tredethlyn?"

He sat in a lazy attitude, with his head thrown back against the rail of the chair, and daintily arranged the stray sheds of tobacco in the bowl of his pipe with the delicate tip of his little finger; while the private lighted a long strip of folded paper and handed it to his master.

"Oh, by the bye," muttered Mr. Lowther, speaking with his teeth shut upon the amber mouthpiece of his pipe, "I've got some news for you, Tredethlyn. Just put your hand in my coat-pocket, and take out the paper you'll find there. Goodness knows what it means,—a legacy of fifty

pounds or so, I suppose. Anyhow, you're a lucky devil. I should be glad enough to get even such a windfall as that; but I never hear of any thing to my advantage."

Francis Tredethlyn had taken the paper from his master's pocket by this time: it was an old copy of the *Times;* and he presented it to the ensign, but the other pushed it away impatiently.

"*I* don't want it," he said; "I think I read every line of it while old Corbett was snoring after dinner. Look at the third advertisement in the second column of the Supplement."

The soldier did as he was directed, and read the advertisement aloud very slowly and in a tone of unmitigated wonder.

"Francis Tredethlyn, nephew of the late Oliver Tredethlyn, of Tredethlyn Grange, near Landresdale, Cornwall. If the above-mentioned will apply to Messrs. Krusdale and Scardon, solicitors, 29 Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, he will hear of something to his advantage."

"The late Oliver Tredethlyn!" cried Francis,

staring blankly at the paper; "my uncle's dead, then!"

"Was he alive when you left England?" asked the ensign.

"He was alive when I left Cornwall. Dead! my uncle Oliver?" the young man said, in a dreamy voice; "and I pictured him to-night in my fancy, plodding home from the outlying lands, as hale and stern and sturdy as ever. Dead! and he may have been dead ever so long, for all this tells me," added Francis Tredethlyn, pointing to the advertisement.

"You were uncommonly fond of your uncle, I suppose, from the way you talk of him," Mr. Lowther remarked, carelessly. He was in a good humour to-night, and ready to talk about any thing,—inclined to take almost an interest in the affairs of another man, and that other man his valet!

"Fond of him!" exclaimed Francis Tredethlyn, "fond of my uncle Oliver! I don't think the creature ever lived that was fond of him, or whose love he'd have cared to have. He liked folks to obey

him, and cut things as close as he wanted 'em cut; but beyond that, he didn't care what they thought or what they did. I suppose he did love his daughter though, after a fashion, but it was a very hard fashion. No, sir, I wasn't particularly fond of my uncle Oliver Tredethlyn, but I'm struck all of a heap by the news of his death coming upon me so sudden; and I'm thinking of the effect that it will have on my cousin Susy,—she's all alone in the world, now,—poor little Susy!"

The ensign looked up quickly. "Susy!" he said, "who the deuce is your cousin Susy?"

"She's my uncle Oliver's only daughter, sir; his only child! too, for the matter of that. We were engaged to be married, sir; but things went wrong with me at home, and I ran away and enlisted."

"Ah! How long ago did all that happen?"

"Nearly five years, sir."

"And you've kept up some sort of a correspondence with your cousin since then, I suppose?"

"Not I, sir; her father wasn't the man to let her write a letter that would cost a lump of money

for postage, or to write any letter to such a scamp as me, either; and poor Susy was too close watched, and too obedient into the bargain, to write without his leave. *I've* written to her now and then, but I've had no news from home since the day I left it, except this that you've brought me to-night."

"And I suppose your uncle has left you a legacy?"

"I suppose so, sir; it isn't likely to be much anyhow, for I never was any great favourite of his."

"You'd better write to these lawyers, though. There's a mail to-morrow: bring out your desk, and write at once."

"Here, sir?"

"Yes, here."

Francis Tredethlyn hesitated for a moment, but seeing that his master was resolute, he brought a clumsy old-fashioned mahogany desk from his chamber at the back of the cottage, and seated himself at a corner of the table with the desk before him. He had placed himself at a very re-

spectful distance from Mr. Harcourt Lowther; but that gentleman, having finished his pipe, got up, and began to walk slowly up and down the room, while his valet squared his elbows and commenced a laborious inscription of his address at the top of the page.

"Tell them that you are Francis Tredethlyn, nephew of Oliver Tredethlyn, and that you can bring forward plenty of witnesses to prove your identity, and so on, as soon as you can get back to England. I don't suppose they'll let you have your legacy till they see you. Ask them to tell you what the amount is, at any rate."

Mr. Lowther did not confine himself to giving his valet these hints upon the composition of his letter; he was good enough to stand behind the young man's chair, and look over his shoulder as he wrote; but as Francis Tredethlyn's penmanship was not of a very rapid order, the ensign's eyes soon wandered from the page, and straying to an open division of the desk, lighted on something that looked like a water-coloured sketch, covered with silver paper.

"Why, you sly dog," he cried with a laugh, "you've got a woman's picture in your desk!"

Francis Tredethlyn blushed and looked very sheepish as he took the little water-coloured sketch out of its silver-paper envelope and handed it submissively to his master.

"It's my cousin Susan's portrait, sir," he said; "it was taken by a travelling artist, who came down our way one summer. It isn't much of a likeness, but it pleases me to look at it sometimes, for I can fill up all that's wanting in the face out of my own mind, and see my cousin smiling at me, as if I was at home again."

Mr. Lowther stood behind his servant's chair looking at the portrait, while the soldier went on writing. It was not the work of a very brilliant artist; there were none of those deliciously careless touches, none of that transparent lightness, which a clever painter's manipulation would have displayed. It was a stiff, laborious little portrait of a girl with hazel brown eyes and smooth banded brown hair, and an innocent childish mouth, rosy and fresh and smiling as a summer's morning in

the country. It was only the picture of a country girl, who seemed to have looked shyly at the artist as he painted her.

"So that's your cousin Susy," said Mr. Lowther, laying the picture down upon the table by Tredethlyn's elbow. "I shan't stop while you address your letter, and I don't want any thing more, so you can go to bed at once if you like. Good night."

The ensign took a candle from a little side-table as he spoke, lighted it at the lamp above Tredethlyn's head, and went out of the room. Francis finished his letter, and placed it on the mantelpiece, where some letters of his master's were lying ready for the next day's mail. He did not go to bed at once, though it was late, and he was free to do so, but sat for some time with his cousin Susan Tredethlyn's portrait in his hand, looking at the girlish face, and thinking of the changes that had come to pass in his old home.

"The old chap was hard and stern with her, and her life was a dull one, poor little girl," thought the soldier; "and she'll have a fine for-

tune, I suppose, now he's gone; but somehow I don't like to think of her left lonely in the world; she's too young and too pretty and too innocent for that. Innocent! why, bless her poor tender little heart, I don't think she knows there's such a thing as wickedness upon this earth."

CHAPTER IV.

TREDETHLYN'S LUCK.

FRANCIS TREDETHLYN had to wait a very long time before there could be any possibility of a letter from the Gray's Inn solicitors, but he endured the delay with perfect tranquillity of mind; and if either of the two men seemed anxious for the arrival of the letter, that man was Harcourt Lowther, and not Francis Tredethlyn. The ensign had a trick of alluding to his servant's good fortune whenever things went especially ill with himself.

"Here am I without a friend in the world to lend me a five-pound note," he would remark, impatiently, "and there are you with the chance of a nice little legacy from that old uncle of yours. I shouldn't wonder if you stand in for four or five hundred at the least."

"I don't think it, sir," the valet always an-

swered, coolly. "I've heard our neighbours say, that what with farming, what with mining, and dabbling a good bit with funds and railway shares, and such like, my uncle must be as rich as a Jew; but for all that, I don't look to be much better off for any thing that he'll have left me. I suppose he's left every thing to my cousin Susan, seeing that he had neither kith nor kin except her and me. But somehow or other I can't imagine his parting with his money to any one, even after his death. I almost fancy that he'd rather have tied it up, if he could, so that the interest upon it would go on accumulating for ever and ever, thinking, as he might perhaps, being old and eccentric, that he'd have a kind of satisfaction, even in his grave, from knowing that the money was going on getting more and more, instead of being spent or squandered."

Francis Tredethlyn did not make this remark in any spirit of ill-nature; he spoke like a man who states a plain fact.

"I daresay he was a regular old curmudgeon," Mr. Lowther answered, "but he must leave his

money to some one, and the fact of those lawyers advertising for you is ample proof that he must have left some of it to you."

Such a conversation as this occurred pretty frequently during the long interval in which Francis Tredethlyn waited for the answer to his letter. Sometimes, when Harcourt Lowther was in a very bad temper, he would accuse his attendant of having grown proud and insolent and lazy, since the advent of that *Times* newspaper, which the ensign had borrowed from Mr. Corbett; but every one of the accusations was as groundless as many other of the officer's complaints against people and things in general. There was no change in Francis Tredethlyn: he did his work cheerfully and well, obeyed orders in a frank, manly spirit, and behaved himself altogether in a most exemplary manner.

The time when a letter from England might be expected came round at last; but Francis Tredethlyn evinced no anxiety for the arrival of the solicitors' epistle. A long season of drought had given way before a sudden downfall of rain,

and Harcourt Lowther, who had planned a couple of days' kangaroo hunting, and had made all necessary arrangements for the performance of his duties by a good-natured and efficient colour-sergeant, found himself a prisoner in his cottage at Port Arthur, with nothing to do but wait for a change in the weather.

It was very tiresome. The accomplished, light-hearted Harcourt Lowther, who could take life so pleasantly in the drawing-rooms of Tyburnia or Belgravia, to whom a summer afternoon amongst a group of fashionable gossips in the smoking-room of his favourite club was only too short, found this terrible Tasmanian day intolerably long. He had tried every available way of getting rid of his time. He had sketched a little, and read a little, and played the flute a little, and smoked a great deal, and had relieved the oppression of his spirits by an incalculable number of yawns, and a little occasional bad language. And now, having exhausted all these resources, he stood with his head leaning listlessly against the roughly finished sash of the window, watching the convict labourers

at work under the heavy rain. He derived some faint ray of comfort from the sight of these two men. At any rate, there were some people in the world worse off than himself,—unlucky wretches who were obliged to work in wet weather, and wear a hideous dress, and eat coarse unpalatable food, or food that appeared abominably coarse and unpalatable in the eyes of Mr. Harcourt Lowther, who had been known upon occasion to turn up his nose at the culinary masterpieces of Soyer and Francatelli.

"Why don't they kill themselves?" muttered the ensign; "they could drive rusty nails into their veins, and make an end of themselves somehow. There are plenty of poisonous things in my garden that they might eat, and make a finish of their lives that way; but they don't. They go on day after day drudging and toiling, and enduring their lives somehow or other. I suppose they hope to get away some day. How ever should *I* bear my life if I didn't hope to get away—if I didn't hope it would come to an end pretty soon?"

Mr. Lowther, having exhausted the pleasure to

be derived from a contemplation of the convicts, took to pacing up and down the two rooms; in the inner of which Francis Tredethlyn was busy cleaning his master's guns.

Walking backwards and forwards, and backwards and forwards, and passing the valet every time, Harcourt Lowther was fain to talk to him; rather for the pleasure and relief of hearing his own voice, than from any desire to be friendly towards his vassal.

"No letter yet, Tredethlyn?" he said.

"No, sir; but it may come any day."

"And you wait for it as quietly as if a legacy, more or less, was nothing to you. I suppose if they send you a remittance, you'll be wanting to buy your discharge, and leave this place; and I shall have to get another servant,—some awkward, ignorant boor perhaps?"

"I don't know about that, sir. There's plenty as good as me, I daresay, among our fellows. Other folks may have been brought up respectably, and taken to soldiering, like me. And as for buying my discharge, I don't say but I should be

glad to do that, if those lawyer people gave me the chance. I should be glad to get back to England and see my little cousin Susy. I always call her little Susy, because I can't help thinking of her as she was when I remember her first, when she and I were boy and girl sweethearts together. I've thought of her a deal since I got the news of her father's death, and I feel anxious about her, somehow or other, when I fancy her left alone among strangers."

Harcourt Lowther, always walking backwards and forwards between the two rooms, was in the sitting-room when his servant said this. He stopped to look out of the window again, and there seemed to be a kind of dismal fascination for him in the convicts, towards whom his eyes wandered in a moody, absent-minded stare.

"And where do you expect to find her—your cousin, I mean—when you do go back to England?" he asked presently.

"At the old farm, sir, to be sure. Where should I find her but there? Poor little soul! she's never known any other home but that, and

isn't likely to leave it in a hurry of her own free will."

"Humph!" muttered the officer, "there's no calculating upon the changes that take place in this world. I never expect to find any thing as I left it when I return to a place or people that I've been absent from for any length of time. I expect to find plenty of changes when I get back to the civilised world again. Do you suppose the people *there* can afford to waste their time thinking of wretched exiles *here*? Life with them is utterly different from what it is with us. When I left England, I was engaged to a beautiful girl with fifty thousand pounds or so for her fortune,—a girl who would have married me, and given me a grand start in life, if it hadn't been for her father: but do you think I expect to find her in the same mind when I go back? Do you think two years' absence won't act as a sponge, and wipe *my* image out of her thoughts? What has a beautiful, frivolous creature like that to do with constancy? Every man who looks at her falls over head and ears in love with her. She is fed

upon flattery and adulation. Is it probable, or natural, or even possible that she will remember *me?*"

It was not likely that Mr. Lowther would ask this question of his valet. He asked it of himself, rather, in a peevish and complaining spirit, and seemed to find a dismal comfort in harping on his wrongs and his miseries.

"I was a fool to think that Maude Hillary could be constant to me!" he muttered angrily. In his anger against a world that had treated him so badly, he was angry with himself for having been so much a fool as to expect better treatment. He walked to a little looking-glass hanging over the mantelpiece, and looked at his handsome face. Was it the face of a man who was to have no place in the world? Were his many graces of person, his charm of manner, his versatility of mind, to serve for nothing, after all?

"When I think of the fellows who get on in the world, I feel inclined to make an end of all this by cutting my throat," he said, as he frowned at the image in the glass.

He felt the region of the jugular vein softly with the ends of his fingers as he spoke, and wondered whether death by the severance of that important artery was a very painful finish for a man to make. He thought of how he might look if Francis Tredethlyn, finding him late to rise one morning, broke into his room and saw him lying in the sunny little chamber deluged with blood and stone dead. He had been very religiously brought up, amongst gentle, true-hearted women; but there was no more pious compunction in his mind as he thought of suicide than there might have been in the mind of an aboriginal inhabitant of the Solomon Islands. He had a mother at home—a mother who believed in him and idolised him, to the disparagement of all other creatures; but no image of her grief and despair arose between him and the scheme of a desperate death. His thoughts travelled in a narrow circle, of which self was the unchanging centre.

"I have heard of men making-away with themselves on the very eve of some event which would have made a complete change in their for-

tunes," he thought presently. "I never read the story of a suicide that did not seem more or less the story of a fool. No, my death shall never make a paragraph for a newspaper. I must be very hard pushed when I come to that. This place gives me the blue-devils, and every thing looks black to me out here. I wish Abel Janz Tasman and Captain Cook had perished before ever they sighted this dismal land. I wish all the lot of petty Dutch traders and navigators had come to an untimely end before ever they discovered any one of these miserable islands, which have been a paradise for convicts and scoundrels, and a hell for gentlemen, during the last half-century. How was I to know, when I bought a commission in her Majesty's service, that the first stage on the road to martial glory was to be the post of head-gaoler at a settlement in the Antipodes? The papers talk of a change in the transportation system, a change that will rid Van Diemen's Land of its present delightful inhabitants; but no change is likely to come about in my time. I shall have to drag my chain out to the last link,

I daresay. It's better to be born lucky than rich, says the proverb; but how about the poor devils who are neither rich nor lucky?"

A rap on the little door, that opened out of the sitting-room on to a patch of garden which lay between the house and the high road, startled Mr. Lowther out of his long reverie.

"It's the fellow with the letters," he cried; and before Francis Tredethlyn could emerge from the inner-room, his master had opened the door, and had taken a little packet of letters, newspapers, and magazines from the man who brought them. "One from my mother; one from—yes—from Maude, at last: the *Times*, *Punch*, *Blackwood's*, *United Service*, and the lawyers' letter!—'Francis Tredethlyn, Esq.!' eh? The legacy must be something more than five hundred, my man, or they'd hardly dub you Esquire."

He tossed the letter over to his servant as he spoke, and looked at the Cornishman furtively, with something like envy expressed in his look. Francis Tredethlyn received the lawyers' epistle very coolly, and retired into the adjoining room

to read it, while his master sat at the table in the parlour, tearing off the flimsy envelope of a letter with a hasty nervous hand.

"From Maude!" he muttered. "At last, my lady: at last, at last!"

The letter was a very long one, written in a clear and bold yet sufficiently feminine hand, on slippery pink paper scented with a perfume that had survived an Australian voyage. The contents of the letter must have been tolerably pleasing to Harcourt Lowther, for he smiled as he read, and seemed to forget all about Francis Tredethlyn's legacy.

"I miss you very much, though papa surrounds us with gaiety; indeed, I think we have been gayer than ever lately; and he never seems so happy as when our dear old lawn is crowded with visitors. But I miss you, Harcourt, in spite of all the cruel insinuations in your last letter. The summer evenings seem long and dreary when I think of you, so far away, so unhappy, as your letters tell me you are, Harcourt, though you are too unselfish to admit the truth in plain words.

I scarcely open the piano once in a month, now that I have no one to play concertante duets. I scarcely care for a new opera; for the men who come into our box bore me to death with their vapid talk, and I know that not one of them understands what he talks about. I am not happy, Harcourt, though you taunt me with my wealth and my position, and the difference between our lives. I am not happy, for our future seems to grow darker and darker every day. I have mentioned you to my father several times, and every time he seems more angry than the last; so now I feel that your name is tacitly tabooed; and any chance allusion to you from the lips of strangers makes me tremble and turn cold. I have tried in vain to comprehend the reason of my father's aversion to any thought of a marriage between you and me. I have been so much a spoiled child, that to be thwarted or opposed on any subject seems strange to me, most of all when that subject is so near my heart. I can scarcely think that my dear father would allow any consideration of fortune to stand

in the way of my happiness, and yet that is the only consideration that can influence him, for I know that he always liked and admired you. You must awhile be patient: what I can do I will. And you must trust me, dear Harcourt, and not pain me again as you have pained me by those unkind doubts of my constancy. You know that money has never been any consideration with me; and you ought to know that I would willingly lose every penny of my fortune rather than sacrifice my promise to you."

"Oh yes; that's all very well!" muttered Mr. Lowther peevishly, after having read this part of Miss Hillary's epistle twice over; "but Lionel Hillary's daughter with fifty thousand pounds or so, and without a penny, are two very different people. Not but what she's always a beautiful girl and a charming girl; but a man can have his pick of charming and beautiful girls, if *that's* all he wants to set him up in life. I love her, Heaven knows; and the sight of her writing sends a thrill through my veins like the touch of her hand, or the fluttering of her breath

upon my cheek. But poverty makes a man practical, and I think I never read a letter that had less of the practical in it than this letter. It's a woman's epistle all over. We must be patient, and wait till we're worn out by waiting, and the engagement between us becomes a chain that binds us both from better things, and the sound of each other's name becomes a nuisance to us from its associations of trouble and responsibility. That's what a long engagement generally comes to. If I'd distinguished myself in India, led a desperate charge against orders, or taken the gate of an Affghan fortress, or done something reckless and mad-headed and lucky, and could have gone back with a captaincy, and a dash of newspaper celebrity about my name, I might have hoped that old Hillary, in a moment of maudlin after-dinner generosity, would have given his consent to my marriage with Maude. But how am I to present myself at Twickenham, and say, 'I have been taking care of convicts for the last two years,—not particularly well, for more convicts have escaped into the bush in my time than

in any other man's time, according to the reports,—and I have come back to England with the same rank that I had when I left, and with less money than I took away with me'? Can I go to Lionel Hillary and say that? Is that the sort of argument which will induce a man to give me his daughter and her fortune?"

He went back to Miss Hillary's letter. It was only a frivolous letter, after all; and it contained more intelligence about a morning concert in Hanover Square, a regatta at Ryde, and a preternaturally sagacious Skye-terrier, than was likely to be gratifying to a discontented exile at Port Arthur. But Mr. Lowther was fain to content himself as he might with the pretty girlish gossip. It was something, after all his grumbling, to receive the assurance that he was not entirely forgotten by the only daughter and sole heiress of one of the richest merchants in the City of London.

He looked up presently from his letter, to see Francis Tredethlyn standing in the doorway between the two rooms, pale to the lips, and

clutching at his throat as if he had some difficulty in breathing.

"What's the matter, man?" asked the ensign; "hasn't the old chap left you any money, after all?"

"It isn't that, sir," gasped the soldier; "there's money enough and to spare. It's my cousin Susy; that poor little innocent creature, that was as pure as the apple-blossoms on the gnarled old trees in the orchard when I left home. She's done something, sir—something that turned her father against her. She's gone away, sir, and no one knows where she's gone, or what's come of her, or whether she's dead or alive. And her father disinherited her, poor lost lamb; and—and that'll tell you all about the fortune, sir, if you want to know about it." Francis Tredethlyn threw the lawyers' letter upon the table before his master, and walked away to the window—the same window at which the ensign had stood looking out at the convicts half an hour before.

Harcourt Lowther read the lawyers' letter, at

first with a listless, indifferent air, and then as eagerly as if he had been reading his own death-warrant. It was a long letter, worded in a very formal manner, but it set forth the fact that the fortune left by Oliver Tredethlyn to his nephew Francis amounted to something over thirty thousand a year.

For some minutes after this fact had been made clear to him Harcourt Lowther sat with the open letter before him, staring at the lines. Then suddenly the blank stupor upon his face gave way to a look of despair. The ensign flung his head and arms upon the table, and burst into tears.

"I have been eating my own heart in this place for nearly two years," he sobbed, "and not one ray of light—no, by the heaven above me! not one—has dawned upon my life; and a valet, a private soldier, the fellow who scours my rooms and blacks my boots, has thirty thousand a year left him!"

There was something so terrible in this hysterical outburst of rage and envy, something so

utterly piteous in this unmanly revolt against another man's good fortune, that Francis Tredethlyn forgot his own trouble before the aspect of his master's degradation.

"Don't, sir," he cried, "for God's sake, don't do that! All the riches in the world wouldn't pay a man for taking on like that. If you want money, you're welcome to borrow some of mine as soon as ever I get the power to lend it. There's more than I care to have, or could ever spend. You'll be welcome to what you want, Mr. Lowther. I don't set much account upon money, and I don't think I ever shall; and the thoughts of this fortune don't give me half the pleasure I've felt in the gift of a crown-piece *long ago, when I was a little lad.* I suppose it *was because I thought then* there was nothing in *all the world that five shillings* wouldn't buy, *nd because I'm wiser* now, and know there are me things a million of money can't purchase. he news of this money has brought the thoughts my father and mother back to me, Mr. Lowther. ll give every sixpence of it, if it could bring

back the past, and pay out the bailiff's man that was sitting by our kitchen-fire at home when my mother lay ill up-stairs. But it can't do that. My father and mother both died poor, and all this money can't buy back one of the sorrowful days they spent in the old farm, when things went from bad to worse, and debt and ruin came down upon us. I don't seem to care for the money, Mr. Lowther; I am dazed and bewildered, somehow, by the greatness of the sum, but I don't seem to care."

The ensign had calmed himself by this time. He got up and brushed the tears from his eyes, — real tears of rage, envy, mortification, and despair. There was a faint blush upon his face, the one evidence of his shame which he could not suppress in a moment, but all other evidences of feeling had passed away.

"You're a good fellow, Tredethlyn," he said, "an excellent, simple-hearted fellow; as simple-hearted as a baby, — for who but a baby ever talked as you talk about this money? and I congratulate you upon your good luck. I see these

lawyer fellows send you a bill for a couple of hundred; that'll buy you off here pleasantly, and get you back to England. My advice to you is to get back as fast as ever you can, and enter into possession of your property. It seems a complicated kind of estate from what I can make out —mining property, and agricultural property, and shares in half the speculations of modern times,— but it's a great estate, and that's all you want to know. Go back; and as soon as ever I can get away from this accursed hole, I'll look you up in London; and I—I *will* borrow a little of that money you generously offer, and I'll turn bear leader, and show you what life is in the upper circle, to which thirty thousand a year is the universal 'open sesame.'"

The ensign slapped his hand upon his servant's shoulder with a jovial air, and spoke almost as gaily as if Oliver Tredethlyn's fortune was to be in some way or other a stroke of good luck for himself.

"Thank you, sir," Francis answered, thoughtfully, "you're very good; but I don't care to

force myself in among grand folks because I'm rich enough to do as they do. I've got a task before me, and it may be a long one."

"A task!"

"Yes; I've got to look for my cousin."

"Your cousin, Susan Tredethlyn!—the girl whose portrait you showed me?"

"Yes, sir. All this money would have been hers, most likely, if she hadn't done something to turn my uncle against her. I can't forget that, you see, sir; and the first use I make of the money will be to spend some of it in looking after her."

"Susan Tredethlyn," muttered Harcourt Lowther,—"Susan Tredethlyn. That portrait you showed me was a very bad one, for I haven't the least notion of what your cousin is like."

CHAPTER V.

COMING HOME.

When the jaded horses of the "Electric" coach from Falmouth stopped before the Crown Inn at Landresdale, in the county of Cornwall, on the 13th of July 1852, the landlord of the little hostelry was somewhat startled by an event which was of very rare occurrence in those parts. A passenger alighted from the back of the coach, and demanded his portmanteau from the guard,—a passenger who, carrying his portmanteau as easily as if it had been a parcel of flimsy milliner's ware, walked straight to the little private parlour opposite the bar, and ensconced himself therein.

"I shall want my dinner, and a bed, Joseph Penruffin," he said to the proprietor of the Crown. "You'd better see the coach off, and then you can come and talk to me."

Mr. Penruffin retired aghast and staring.

"I don't know who he *is*, Sarah," he remarked to a comely-looking woman, who was sitting amongst a noble array of shelves and bottles in a shady little bar that seemed a good deal too small for such a portly presence. "His name's as clean gone out of my mind as if I'd never set eyes upon him; but I know him, and he knows me, Sarah, for he called me by my name as glib as you please, and his face—Lord bless us and save us!—his face is as familiar to me as yourn."

The passenger who had surprised the Crown Inn from its lazy tranquillity stood at the little window looking out at the coach. The passenger was Francis Tredethlyn, lately a foot-soldier in her Majesty's service, now a gentleman of landed estate and funded property; but very little changed by the change in his fortune. As he had been independent and fearless in the days when he ruled his life by the orders of other men, so was he simple and unpretending now in the hour of his sudden prosperity. What he had said to his master in the cottage at Port Arthur in the first

flush of his new fortunes appeared to be equally true of him now. He did not seem to care about his wealth. He was in no way elated by a change of fortune which would have sent some men into a madhouse.

"It seems to me, somehow, as if there was a kind of balance kept up in this world between good and evil, like the debtor and creditor sides of a ledger. I put down my uncle Oliver's fortune on one side, and it looks as if I was the luckiest fellow in Christendom. But there's the loss of poor little Susy must go down on the other side, and then the book looks altogether different. The loss of her—yes, the loss—that's the word! If the earth had opened and swallowed her up, she couldn't seem more lost to me than she is."

The passengers of the "Electric" had recruited themselves by this time, and a fresh pair of horses had replaced the tired animals who now stood steaming in the great stable-yard. The coach rolled slowly off, along a road that lay straight before the windows of the Crown—a road that crept under the steep slope of a thickly wooded

hill, defended by an old crumbling wall, which, even in its decay, was grander and stronger than any modern wall that ever girdled a modern gentleman's estate. The dark red-brick wall, and all the sombre woods above it, belonged to the Marquis of Landresdale, upon whose mansion and estate the little town or village of Landresdale was a kind of dependant, the inhabitants being almost all of them supported indirectly or directly by the patronage of the great man and his household. By these simple people the Cornish nobleman was spoken of with awe and reverence as the "Marquis;" and that the world held any other creature with a claim to that title was a fact utterly ignored —it may be, even discredited—by the ratepayers of Landresdale. Under the shadow of Landresdale House they were born and lived; and in a church which was only a kind of mausoleum for the departed nobles and dames of the house of Landresdale they worshipped every sabbath-day, until, in the minds of some hero-worshippers, the figure of the Marquis grew into a giant shape that blotted out all the world beyond Landresdale.

"How familiar the old place seems to me, and yet how strange!" thought Francis Tredethlyn, as he stood at the window. "There's Jim Teascott the cobbler over the way, sitting in the very same attitude he was in when I stopped at the corner below to take my last look at Landresdale. But the street seems as if it had dwindled and shrunk away into half the size it used to be; and I feel as strange—as strange as if I'd been dead and buried, and had come to life again after folks had forgotten all about me: even the very seasons are all wrong, somehow, to my mind, as they might seem to a man that had been lying dead ever so long."

Francis Tredethlyn rubbed his broad palm across his forehead, as if to clear some kind of cloud away from his intellect. It was scarcely strange that he should be confused and mystified by the seasons. He had left autumnal clouds and winds in the Antipodes; and after a hundred days or so at sea, he found a blazing July sky above his native land, and he felt as if he had, somehow or other, been cheated out of a winter. He looked

at a little pocket-book, in which he had written some names and addresses and other memoranda, and in which the initials "S. T." occurred very often. Those initials meant Susan Tredethlyn, and the memoranda in the pocket-book chiefly related to inquiries which Francis had made about his lost cousin.

Those inquiries had resulted in very little information. The lawyers had only been able to tell Francis the bare facts relating to his uncle's death; how one day, when they least expected to see the old man, he had suddenly presented himself at their offices, very pale, very feeble, and with an awful something, which even they recognised as the sign-manual of the King of Terrors himself, imprinted on his haggard features; how he had seated himself quietly in his accustomed place, and had dictated to them, deliberately and unflinchingly, the terms of a will, by which he bequeathed every shilling he possessed to his nephew, Francis Tredethlyn; how, when they, as in duty bound, remonstrated with him about the injustice that such a will would inflict upon his

only daughter, a hideous frown had distorted his face, and he had struck his clenched fist upon the office-table, crying, with the most horrible imprecation ever uttered in that place, that no penny of his getting should ever go to save his daughter from rotting in a workhouse or starving to death on the king's highway;—he had said this, and in such a manner as most effectually to put an end to all remonstrance on the part of his solicitors. This was all that the lawyers could tell Francis Tredethlyn about his cousin Susan; but they had gone on to tell him how his uncle had insisted on leaving the office alone and on foot; how he had walked the best part of the way from Grays Inn to an old-fashioned commercial inn in the Borough, and how he had broken down at last, only a hundred yards from his destination, and had fainted away on the threshold of a chemist's shop, whence he had been carried to his death-bed. This had happened on the 30th of June in the preceding year; and this was all that the lawyers had to tell Francis Tredethlyn, over and above such intelligence as related only to the extent and nature

of the property bequeathed to him by his late uncle.

But in Landresdale the name of Oliver Tredethlyn was almost as well known as that of the Marquis himself; and in Landresdale Francis hoped to learn the true story of his cousin's fate. He stood now looking out of the window into the rustic highway, as quiet in the summer evening calm as if it had been a street in one of the buried cities of Italy, as peaceful in its drowsy aspect as if no palpitating human heart had ever carried its daily burden of care and sorrow along the narrow footways, beneath the shadow of the peaked roofs and quaint abutting upper stories. He stood looking out, and remembering himself a boy in that old hill-side street; he stood there now, wondering alike at the past and the present, which by contrast seemed both equally strange and unnatural; he stood there in all the flush and vigour of his youth, a tall, broad-shouldered, simple-hearted soldier, with a fortune far exceeding the narrow limits of his arithmetical powers, as ignorant of all the real world that lay before him as a little country

lad who rides to town upon the top of a load of hay and expects to find the streets paved with gold, and the Queen dressed in her crown and robes, and sitting on her throne with the ball and sceptre in her hands for ever and ever.

The landlord of the Crown came bustling in presently with a wooden tray of knives and forks, and glasses and cruets, that would have amply served for a dinner-party of half-a-dozen. He laid the cloth with great ceremony, although with a certain air of briskness inseparable from inn-keeping, even in the laziest and dullest village in all England; and he kept a furtive watch upon his guest throughout all his operations, from the preparatory polishing down of the mahogany-table, to the final flourish with which he removed a very large cover from a very small rumpsteak.

"I think I ought to know you, sir," he said courteously, as Francis Tredethlyn seated himself at the table.

"I think you ought, Joseph Penruffin; I think you ought to remember Francis Tredethlyn, son of your old friend John Tredethlyn, of Pen

Gorbold, who was a little bit too friendly in this house, perhaps, for his own prosperity."

"Francis Tredethlyn!" cried the landlord, clapping his hand upon his knee, "Francis Tredethlyn! To be sure it is! To think that I should forget a face that was once as familiar to me as my own son's! Francis Tredethlyn! Why, I remember you a lad playing cricket on the green yonder with my own boys. And you've come into a very fine fortune, sir, I understand; and I hope you will excuse the liberty, if I make so bold as to wish you every happiness with it, Francis Tredethlyn. Lord bless us and save us! why, I can remember you a little bit of a toddling child coming into Landresdale Church with your mother on a summer Sunday morning, as if it was yesterday! I ask pardon for being so bold and free-like, but the sight of your face takes me back to old times, and I'm apt to forget myself."

Mr. Penruffin's mind was curiously divided between the memories of the past and his desire to be duly reverential to Francis Tredethlyn's new fortunes. The young man smiled as he recognised

the influence of his newly-acquired wealth at war with the associations of his boyhood. He had seen pretty much the same thing in the office of Messrs. Krusdale and Scardon. He was beginning already to perceive that an income of thirty thousand a year made a kind of barrier between himself and poorer men, and that they regarded him with the same feeling of mingled reverence and familiarity with which they would have looked at a very ordinary statue seen across a wonderful screen of virgin gold.

"And the sight of *your* face takes *me* back to old times, Mr. Penruffin," he said, with rather a mournful accent, "and I'd freely give half this great fortune of mine if I could bring back one of those summer Sunday mornings in the old church, and see myself a little fellow again, trudging by my mother's side, with a green-baize bag of prayer-books on my arm. I'd give five thousand pounds for a silk-dress I saw in a Plymouth draper's fifteen years ago, when I was too poor to do any thing but wish for it, if my mother were alive to wear it. I used to think, when I was a lad, of

what I'd buy for my mother out of the first five-pound note I ever earned; and now I've got thirty thousand a year, and there's nothing upon all this earth that I can buy for her, except a gravestone to mark the spot where she lies."

"Thirty thousand a year!" muttered the landlord in an undertone, which had just a tinge of disappointment in it. The Landresdale people had given their imaginations free play since the death of Oliver Tredethlyn, and the old man's fortune had swelled into almost fabulous proportions with the lapse of time; so thirty thousand didn't seem so very much, after all. There had been an idea in Landresdale that Francis Tredethlyn would most likely buy up the Marquis's estate off-hand, and if practicable make a handsome offer for the purchase of the title.

"I am sure, sir, your feelings do you credit," said Mr. Penruffin, after that brief sense of disappointment; "I may say very great credit," he added, with emphasis,—as if any display of feeling from the possessor of thirty thousand a year were specially meritorious. "I suppose you have

come down this way to survey your property, sir; to look about you a little, eh?" inquired the landlord of the Crown, when Francis had finished his frugal dinner.

"Not I," the young man answered; "I scarcely know what my property is yet, though the lawyers told me a long rigmarole about it. No, I've come on a very different errand," he added gravely. "You remember my cousin, Susan Tredethlyn, I daresay? I have come to look for her."

Joseph Penruffin shook his head solemnly, and breathed a long sigh that was almost a groan.

"If that's your errand here, sir, I'm afraid it isn't likely to be a very fortunate one. Folks in Landresdale never expect to see Susan Tredethlyn again; she went away from the farm four years ago; no one knows exactly where she went; no one knows why she went. There's your uncle's old servants, Mr. Tredethlyn, of course they *might* have said something, if they'd liked to it. But you may as well go and question the tombstones in Landresdale churchyard as question *them*. All

I know, or all any body knows in this place is, that your cousin Susan went away and never came back again; and it stands to reason that she must have done something very bad indeed, and made her father very desperate against her, before the old man would have gone and left all his money away from her—meaning no disrespect to you, sir, but only looking at it in the light of human nature in general," added the landlord, apologetically.

"I'll never believe that Susan Tredethlyn did any thing wicked or unwomanly till her own lips tell me so," cried Francis, bringing his hand heavily down on the table. "She may have made my uncle desperate against her, *that's* likely enough, for he was always hard with her; and when I think of his having hoarded all this money, and remember the life my cousin Susan used to lead, I can scarcely bring myself to believe that she was his own flesh and blood. I'll never believe that she did any thing wrong. I'll never believe that she could grow to be any thing different from what she was when I left home,—

an innocent, modest little creature, who was almost frightened of her own pretty looks when she caught a sight of herself in a glass. But I'm going up to the old house; and if Martha Dryscoll or her husband know any thing of my lost cousin, I'll get the knowledge from them, though I have to wring it out of their wizoned old throats."

The young man rose as he said this, and took his hat and stick from a chair near the window. Joseph Penruffin watched him with something like alarm upon his countenance.

"You'll sleep here to-night, sir?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm going straight up to the Grange, and I don't know how long I may be gone; but I'll come back here to sleep. I should scarcely fancy lying down in one of those dreary old rooms; I should expect to see the wandering spirit of my lost cousin come and look in at me from the darkness outside my window. No; however late I may be, I'll come back here to sleep."

"And perhaps you'd like some little trifle for supper, sir, having made such an uncommon poor

dinner," suggested the landlord,—"a chicken and a little bit of grass, or a tender young duck and a dish of peas?"

But Francis Tredethlyn was walking up the little village street out of earshot of these savoury suggestions before the landlord had finished his sentence.

"I don't call that manners," muttered Mr. Penruffin; "but I shall cook the chicken for ten o'clock, and chance it; he can afford to pay for it, whether he eats it or not. And I think, taking into consideration old acquaintance and thirty thousand a year, it would only have been friendly in Francis Tredethlyn if he'd ordered a bottle of wine with his dinner."

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

THE sun was low when Francis Tredethlyn left the Crown Inn, and walked slowly up the village street. The sun was low, and already a crimson glory flickered here and there upon the quaint old casements. The young man walked slowly, looking about him with a half-doubtful, half-bewildered gaze, like a man who sees his native village in a dream. And indeed no village in the vision of a sleeper could be more tranquil in its rustic repose than this Cornish street, steep and stony, mounting to the summit of a hill, upon whose top the great gates of Landresdale loomed grim and stately, like the entrance to an ogre's castle in fairyland. You climbed the steep little street; and you came to the big gates of Landresdale; and that was all. The village ended here; and

there was nothing for you to do but to go back again. It was like coming to the end of the world, and finding a great Elizabethan door of ponderous oak and iron barred against any chaotic realm that might lie beyond our every-day earth. There may have been occasions—indeed, the inhabitants of Landresdale would have testified to many such—on which those ponderous doors swung open on their mighty hinges: but the ignorant traveller, looking at them shut, found it difficult to realise the possibility of their ever being opened. They looked like the doors of a mausoleum: which may open once in half a century to admit the coffined dead, but can never be unclosed for any meaner purpose. Grim towers flanked the stony arch on either side, and two old rusty cannon displayed their iron noses within the shadow of the towers, ready to fire a volley down the hilly street whenever the simple folks of Landresdale should evince any revolutionary tendencies.

To the right of the great gates there was a handsome wing of solid masonry, whose Tudor

windows opened upon a square courtyard, where there were more cannon, and upon a prim, old-fashioned garden, shut in by a high wall, and only visible to the wanderer through the iron rails and arabesques of a lofty gate, amidst whose scrollwork the arms of the Landresdales and Treverbyns, the Courtenays and Polwheles, were interlaced and entangled.

The garden-wall bounded the estate of Rashleigh Vyvyan Trevannence, Marquis of Landresdale; and beneath the shelter of that old ivy-covered red-brick wall lay the churchyard, quiet and shadowy, dark with the dense foliage of great yew-trees, thick with long tangled grass, that grew high amongst the slanting headstones. Francis Tredethlyn stopped by the low wooden gate, and leaning against the moss-grown pillar that supported it, looked up at the square towers which seemed like stony sentinels for ever keeping guard over the entrance to Landresdale. The light was red upon the corner window that faced the western sky, but all the other casements stared blankly and darkly out upon the graves in the

churchyard, and the empty village-street, in which one woman, toiling slowly upwards with a pitcher of water that slopped and trickled at intervals upon the pavement, was the only living presence.

"The great gates look just the same as they used to look," thought Francis Tredethlyn. "When I was a boy, and read fairy-tales, I always fancied that the enchanted castle the wandering prince came to in the middle of a wood, or on the summit of a great mountain, was like Landresdale, a castle standing all alone in the middle of the way, with no road to the right nor to the left, so that the prince *must* go in and ask shelter, though he knew that harm would come of it, or else go back and lose all the trouble of his journey. How I used to long to pull that bell when I was a lad!" thought Francis, looking at the iron ring which swung from a massive chain on one side of the archway.

"But I've no need to dawdle here," he thought, as he pushed the gate open and went into the churchyard. "It seems as if the nearer I get to

the place where I am certain to hear the truth about Susan, the more I dread hearing it."

The ignorant traveller who might turn away from the great gates of Landresdale to descend the hill under the impression that the county of Cornwall came to an abrupt termination upon the threshold of the Marquis's domain, would have been mistaken. There were other and higher lands, broad stretches of hill and moorland, lying beyond the churchyard, to the right of the quaint old garden and the Gothic towers and casements: and it was thitherward that Francis Tredethlyn directed his steps. He crossed the churchyard, only pausing briefly before one tombstone, upon which the names of Sarah and John Tredethlyn were cut, low down on the stone, at the bottom of a long list of Tredethlyns, who lay buried in that churchyard. The young man let himself out of the solemn precinct by a little rusty iron gate that opened on a broad expanse of common land sloping upward towards the western sky, and only broken here and there by a quarry or a patch of water.

"It looks bleak and barren enough," thought

Francis, with a shudder; "but it's hereabouts that my uncle Oliver picked up a good bit of his money. The tin mines lie out yonder; and the stone quarry in the hollow there brought him in plenty, if folks tell the truth."

Francis Tredethlyn might have echoed the boast of Helen Macgregor had he chosen, and with stronger justification than that lady, for the earth upon which he trod was not only his native land but his own peculiar property, by virtue of certain yellow-looking parchments under the sign-manual of an Earl and Baron of Landresdale who flourished in the reign of James I., and by payment of an eccentric annual tribute in the shape of a young doe and a hundredweight of virgin tin. It was all his own, this bleak waste land which Francis Tredethlyn, late private soldier in her Majesty's service, late valet to a capricious master, now trod under his feet. Nor was it the less to be considered for its barrenness of aspect, for rich metals lay deep below the heathery surface, in mines that were amongst the oldest and most valuable in Cornwall.

But Francis Tredethlyn was in no wise elated or disturbed by the importance of his possession. He had never felt any ardent desire for wealth, and as yet he had not begun to realise its manifold advantages. He saw the effect of his fortune upon other men, and smiled at their weakness; but what had been true of him in the first hour of his altered position was true of him now,—he had no power either to realise or rejoice in the extent of his riches.

He walked slowly across the barren moorland, always upward, always mounting towards a long ridge of western hill, behind which two streaks of yellow light stretched low against the darkening sky,—a bleak, bare-looking hill, that seemed the very end of the world. It was upon this hillside that Tredethlyn Grange had been built four centuries ago, in the days when men built their houses with a view to endurance; and it stood there still, a long gray tenement of moss-grown stone, with narrow casement windows, looking darkly out upon the twilit moor. The larger portion of the old house had been uninhabited

during the tenantship of the Tredethlyns, who, in a spirit of economy, had located themselves in the inferior rooms lying at one end of the rambling mansion. It was in one of these rooms that a light now twinkled faintly; and it was towards this end of the house that Francis Tredethlyn directed his steps. There had been a moat once on two sides of the house, but cabbages now grew upon the sloping earth. There had been a garden once before the Grange, and an old stone sundial still marked the spot; but of all the trim flower-beds and angular paths there remained no vestige now. A field of trefoil, bounded by a low stone wall, lay beyond two broken pillars that had once supported a pair of handsome gates; and the sheep browsed close beneath the dim latticed windows.

"It seems like the end of the world to me to-night," thought Mr. Tredethlyn; "and yet once it was comfortable and home-like enough, when I sat with Susy of a night by the fire in the kitchen, while she darned the old man's gray-worsted stockings. And to think that he had such oceans

of money all that time, and yet seemed almost to grudge his only child every gown she wore, and every bit of bread she put into her mouth." The young man was close to the familiar threshold by this time. He knocked at a low, narrow door in the neighbourhood of the one dimly-lighted window, and then drew back a few paces, looking up at the old-fashioned casements.

"This is the window of Susy's room," he thought. "How black and dark it looks to-night! I remember coming up here the night before I ran away to Falmouth to enlist. I remember standing by the low wall yonder, in the cold autumn night, looking up at that very window. There was a light burning then, and I thought of how I should see it burning just the same when I came back, and how I'd throw a handful of earth up at the old window, and Susy would look out, startled and wondering, to find her faithful sweetheart come back to her from the end of the world. And now it's this place that seems like the end of the world somehow, and I'm every bit as far from Susy now as ever I was out yonder."

The door was opened only a very little way, and a woman's face, so hard and angular that it seemed almost to cut into the dusky atmosphere, peered out at the traveller.

"What do you please to want, sir?" she asked, suspiciously.

"I want to ask you a few questions, Martha Dryscoll. I've come from the Antipodes to ask them."

"Mr. Tredethlyn!" cried the woman, opening the door to its widest extent; "Mr. Francis Tredethlyn come home to his own like a ghost in the night! I make so bold as to bid you welcome, sir. Your uncle's empty chair stands ready for you. The house seems strange and lonesome without him."

It was not everybody who would have ascribed to Mr. Oliver Tredethlyn the power to enliven any house with the smallest ray of cheerfulness, or brighten any fireside with so much as the faintest glimmer of light. But Martha Dryscoll spoke in all good faith. She had believed in her master, and had worked for him, and pinched for him, and half-starved herself and other people

for his sake, throughout five-and-thirty years of the dreariest and hardest life that woman ever endured. He had picked her up, starved and almost dying, upon a high road near one of his outlying farms, and had taken her from field-labour and all its attendant pains to be his housekeeper and—slave; and she had repaid this favour a thousandfold by a devotion that knew no weariness, and a rigid economy that extended itself to the saving of a grain of salt in the old spindle-legged leaden saltcellars.

Oliver Tredethlyn had not been actuated by any Quixotic motive in this eccentric choice of a servant. He took his housekeeper from the wayside because he saw in her a stuff he had vainly sought in the pampered menials who had hitherto presented themselves to his notice. He had been attracted to Martha in the first instance by her gaunt face and gaunter figure, which would have been sufficiently alarming in one of King Frederick William's chosen grenadiers. He had been attracted still more by her curt answers to his curt questions, in which she told him that she had

walked thirty miles that day before lying down, as she believed, to die; that she had walked twenty miles the day before, and five-and-twenty the day before that; that she had not tasted food for the last eight-and-forty hours; and that she had worked in the fields and lived upon an average of twopence a day ever since she could remember.

It was upon this that a bargain was struck between Oliver Tredethlyn, of Tredethlyn Grange, of the one part, and Martha Blank, Martha Anybody, of the other part, for the poor creature had no knowledge of any special surname to which she might lay claim. She had been called Carroty Jane in one place, because her hair was red and her name was not Jane. She had been called Gawky Bet, and Lanky Poll, at other places, on account of her abnormal height; but the name she had received in the Union, where her earlier years had been passed, was Martha, and it was this name which she herself recognised as her legitimate appellation. She went home with Oliver Tredethlyn in one of his empty wagons,

and ate her first spare meal in the Grange kitchen before nightfall: and from that hour until the old man's death she served him well and faithfully. She lived with him all the days of his bachelorhood, and resignedly united herself to his bailiff when he commanded her so to do. This faithful creature welcomed Mr. Tredethlyn's wife when he took it into his head to bring home a small tenant-farmer's pretty daughter, who had been forced into a marriage with a man whom she detested; and, faithful and untiring to the last, this rough-handed, brawny-armed servant watched by the young wife's sick-bed during those dull years in which she slowly withered and faded, from a fresh, blooming girl into a prematurely old woman, and so sank by lingering stages into an early grave, leaving behind her one only child, whose infancy and girlhood were brightened by no softer light than such as might be shed from the grim, grenadier-like affection of Martha Dryscoll.

Jonathan Dryscoll, the farm-bailiff whom Oliver Tredethlyn had desired his housekeeper to marry, was ten years younger than his wife, and was so

poor and weak a creature morally and physically in her hands, that he seemed at least half a century her junior. If she told him to do any thing, he did it. If she told him to think any thing, he thought it: or would have done so, if the mental exercise had not been generally beyond the scope of his faculties. He was as honest and faithful as Martha herself: but if Martha had told him to go and fire all the ricks on Oliver Tredethlyn's property, he would have done it with the blind trustfulness of a princess in a child's story-book, who obeys the eccentric behests of a fairy godmother. That Martha Dryscoll could do any thing wrong, or think any thing wrong, was an hypothesis which Jonathan her husband had never contemplated. Perhaps the pleasantest thing about this couple was that there was no disagreeable evidence of Martha's authority. Indeed, that worthy woman was most punctilious in respect to her liege lord and husband, whom she always spoke of as "the master." Jonathan obeyed and trembled, but the sceptre which his wife wielded was an invisible one, and the chains that bound her slave

were as impalpable as if they had been fashioned of cobwebs.

Martha Dryscoll was not renowned for her capacity of expressing any species of emotion; but some faint ray of pleasure kindled in her grim face as she conducted Francis Tredethlyn through the kitchen to an apartment that had served as a kind of state-chamber for three generations of his race. She set the candle on the polished mahogany table, and, folding her arms, contemplated the new master of the Grange at her leisure. In that dim light, in her quaint, scanty dress, with a brown background of oaken wainscot behind her, she looked like a homely figure in one of Jan Steen's pictures, a hard-faced, angular housewife, honest, laborious, and economical, with her ear perpetually open to the leaking of beer-barrels, or the boiling-over of soup-kettles; her eye ever on the alert to perceive waste or destruction.

"I wish you welcome, Mr. Tredethlyn," she said; and then, with something like sadness in her tone, "If the money *was* to go away from her,

better that it should go to you than to strangers. I don't think you'd turn your back upon her, if she was to need your help; would you now, Mr. Francis?"

"Turn my back upon her!" cried the young man,—"turn my back upon my cousin Susy! Do you think I want the money that ought to have been hers? With God's blessing, I will go to the end of the world to find my poor little girl. But tell me—tell me all about it, Martha. I know you are a good creature. I know you were fond of Susan, though you seemed hard and stern, like the old man. Tell me all you know about my lost cousin, and don't fear but I'll make good use of my knowledge."

"It isn't much I have to tell, sir," answered the housekeeper, very gravely. "You remember old Mr. Restwick of Pen Gorbold. Folks say that he's almost as rich as our master was. However it is, he and master was always fast friends; and when Mrs. Restwick had been dead a little over a twelvemonth, he and master seemed to get friendlier than ever, and was always laying their

heads together about something, old Restwick hanging about this place, and sitting in our kitchen, and in this very room—for master made quite a fuss with the old man, and would sit in the parlour on his account—all the summer time. Miss Susan usen't to like the old man, but she daredn't say as much, seeing as he was her father's friend. Heaven, as looks down upon me, knows, Mr. Francis, that the real reason of old Restwick pottering about our place night after night never came into my head, no more than if it had been so much Greek or Latin. But one night—one quiet summer evening, after such a day as to-day—the truth came out all at once; and it came upon Susan Tredethlyn as it came upon me—like a thunderbolt. Can you guess what it was, Mr. Francis?"

"No!" exclaimed the young man, staring at Martha Dryscoll with a bewildered expression on his face.

"Nor any one else, Mr. Francis, that wasn't so wrapped up in the love of his money that the very heart inside of him had turned to stuff as

hard as his golden guineas, or harder; for there's some kind of furnace as will melt *them*, isn't there, Mr. Francis? On the night I am telling you of, my master told Susan the meaning of old Restwick's visits. She was to marry him—poor, pretty young thing. He'd promise to make such and such—settlements—I think master called 'em, and she'd be mistress of Pen Gorbold farm, and one of the richest women in this part of the country. The poor dear only gave one shriek, Mr. Francis, and fell down upon the floor at her father's feet as white and as quiet as a corpse."

"The hard-hearted villain!" cried Francis, pacing up and down the room; "the infernal villain!"

"She didn't lie there long; she wasn't let to do that. Mr. Tredethlyn lifted her up by the arm, and set her on her feet, fierce and savage-like; and when she opened her eyes, and looked about her, all stupefied and bewildered, he began to talk to her. It was cruel talk to hear from a father to his child; it was a cruel sight to see her trembling and shivering, and only held from falling by his hard hand clenched upon her arm.

I tried to interfere between them, Mr. Francis; but my master let his daughter drop into a chair, and pushed me out of the room. Me and Jonathan was sleeping in the room over the stables then, and Mr. Tredethlyn took me by the shoulders, and put me out of the door that opens from the kitchen into the stone-yard at back. I heard the door bolted against me, and I knew I could be no help or comfort to that poor child all night. The door's thick, but I could just hear Susan Tredethlyn's sobs now and then, like as if they'd been blown towards me on the winds, and her father's voice speaking loud and stern; I listened till all seemed quiet, and I was in hopes his heart was softened towards her. But when I got up at four o'clock next morning—for it was harvest-time, and we were very busy—Susan Tredethlyn's room was empty, and the front door was unlocked and unbolted. She'd run away, Mr. Francis; she'd let herself out some time in the night, and run away. There was a little scrap of a shawl she used to wear hanging to the latch of the door. That was bad news for me to tell my master,

Mr. Francis; but I had to tell it. He turned white, and glared at me for a minute just like a wild beast, and there was a choking, gurgling kind of noise in his throat. But he was as quiet after that one minute as if he had been made of iron. 'So much the better, Mrs. Dryscoll,' he said; 'an undutiful daughter isn't worth the meat she eats.'"

"But he went after her," said Francis; "surely he made some attempt to bring her back? He didn't let a poor ignorant girl go out into the world without a friend—without a sixpence?"

"She had a little money, Mr. Francis. Her father had given her a sovereign on her birthday every year for the last ten years, making her promise to save the money. She had saved the money, for she had no chance to spend it, poor child; and she took that money with her, for when I looked about her room I missed the little box she used to keep it in. As to looking for her, Mr. Tredethlyn never stirred hand or foot to do it, though I went on my bended knees to him,

begging and praying of him to bring her back. As to me, Mr. Francis, I'm but a poor ignorant countrywoman, that never learned to read and write till I was getting on for thirty; but I got my husband to go to Falmouth with an advertisement for the county paper, saying as 'S. T. was to remember she had a true friend in M. D., and was to be sure and write to her whenever she wanted help.' I daredn't say more, sir; and I think when master saw that advertisement he knew what it meant, for he glared at me across the paper, just as he glared at me when I told him his daughter was gone."

"And he never relented—he never softened towards that poor unhappy girl?"

"For three years, sir, he never mentioned her name. Night after night he'd sit and write, and make out his accounts, and calculate his profits, and such-like, and he'd talk to me fast enough about the business of the farm; but he never spoke his daughter's name. One day he got a letter directed in her hand. I took it from the postman at Landresdale myself, one afternoon

when I was down there marketing, and I wrote down the postmark that was on it, but that was all I ever knew of the letter. When my master saw the hand, he came over all of a tremble like, and there was something awful in the sight of that stern old man trembling and shivering like as if he'd been stricken by the palsy; but he got over it in a minute, and read the letter, me watching him all the time. If his face had been stone, it couldn't have told less. He crumpled-up the letter, and put it in his pocket, and for three months he never spoke of that nor of his daughter. Yet I knew somehow that he thought of her; for a kind of change came over him, and he seemed always brooding, brooding, brooding; and he'd start up all of a sudden when we was all sitting of a night quiet in this kitchen—he'd start up as if he was going right away, and then heave a long sigh, and sit down again. But he never said any thing about what was in his thoughts, till one morning he came to me, and said very quietly, 'Pack me some clothes in a carpet-bag, Mrs. Dryscoll. I'm going to London

to look for my daughter.' My husband and him went on foot down to Landresdale to catch the Falmouth coach; but our master never came back. The next news as we heard of him, Mr. Francis, came to us a month after he'd left. It was a letter from the lawyers to say as Mr. Oliver Tredethlyn was dead."

"And is that all?"

"Yes, Mr. Francis; I can tell you no more. My master was a good master to me, and I served him faithfully, and worked hard to save his money. But things have all seemed to come before me in a new light since that night when I saw Susan Tredethlyn fall white and cold at her father's feet, and him without pity for her. It seems as if I'd been stone-blind up to that time, Mr. Francis; and my eyes was opened all of a sudden; and I saw that we'd been all wicked heathens, making an idol out of money that had never brought happiness or comfort to any living creature; least of all to ourselves. I saw it all at once that night, Mr. Francis, and I knew that our lives had been wrong somehow."

Martha Dryscoll spoke very earnestly. She was a good woman, after her own manner; eager to do her duty to the uttermost, grateful for small favours, faithful and affectionate. A noble heart beat in that grenadier-like form, a gentle spirit looked out of those hard gray eyes. She told the story of her young mistress's flight with a sorrowful solemnity, undisturbed by tears. Perhaps her hard childhood, her bitter youth, her joyless middle life had dried up the source of that tender womanly emotion; for Martha Dryscoll had never been seen by living witnesses to shed a tear. She unlocked a grim-looking workbox, and took from it a little pocket-book, out of which she tore a leaf.

"That's the name that was on the post-mark, Mr. Francis," she said, handing the paper to Mr. Tredethlyn.

The young man read the word Coltonslough.

"Coltonslough," he repeated, "I never heard of a place of that name. But I'll find it, if it's the most obscure spot upon the earth. God bless you, Martha Dryscoll, for I believe you're a good woman."

He held out his hand, and grasped the housekeeper's bony fingers as he spoke.

"We've been awaiting—me and the master—for orders from you as to what we was to do, sir. We're ready to serve you faithful, if you want our service; but we're ready to leave the old place, if we're any burden upon you. You'll be coming to settle here, maybe?"

"No," answered Francis Tredethlyn, with something of a shudder. "If I'd found Susan here, as I once thought to find her, I should have been glad enough to settle somewhere in these parts. As it is, there's something in the place that gives me the heartache, and I doubt if I shall ever come near it again. Whatever wages you and your husband had in my uncle's time shall be doubled from to-night, Mrs. Dryscoll; and if my cousin Susan is still alive, and should ever find her way back to this place, I should like her to see a light burning in the old window, and to find a faithful friend ready to bid her welcome home."

Francis Trédethlyn did not linger very long in the house where a great part of his boyhood had

been spent. Martha's husband came in presently, smelling very strongly of cowhouse and stable, and the two would fain have given Mr. Tredethlyn a detailed account of their stewardship: but the young man had no heart to listen to them. What did it matter to him that he was the poorer by the death of an Alderney cow on the pasture-farm down in the valley, or the richer by a great sheep-shearing season on the hill? He came home to find no creature of his kith or kin. He stood as much alone in the world as Adam before Eve was created to bear him company; and he felt very desolate in spite of his thirty thousand a year.

He walked back to Landresdale across the bleak moorland under the still summer night. Away in the distance he saw the dark expanse of purple ocean melting imperceptibly into purple sky: and vague and dim as that shadowy distance seemed the unknown future that lay before him. He slept at the Crown, and left Landresdale early the next morning by the Falmouth coach, journeying Londonward: but he had by no means abandoned his search for Susan Tredethlyn.

CHAPTER VII.

MAUDE HILLARY'S ADORERS.

FROM the bleak moorland on the Cornish hills, where no tree can flourish, and where the sweeping breath of the salt sea-breeze nips the tender verdure, and makes the quiet sheep wink again as they look oceanward; from the hilly district beyond Landresdale, which seems like the end of the world, and is at any rate the finishing-point of this British Isle, to the valley of the Thames, the sheltered and lovely hollow nestling under the wooded heights about the Star-and-Garter, is about as great a change of scene as all England can afford. It is like the pushing away of some battered front scene which has done duty for the blasted heath near Forres, whereon Macbeth met the witches, since the days when Garrick himself represented the ambitious Thane, to reveal a

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glimpse of fairyland fresh from the pencil of Mr. Beverley, with sunlit cascades glimmering here and there amongst the verdant valleys, and forest-trees reflected in the calm bosom of a lake.

Mr. Hillary's place lay in a sheltered bend of the river, nearer to Isleworth than to Twickenham —a spot where the trees grew thicker and the shadows fell darker on the quiet water, and the plash of oars was less often heard, than higher up the river. Mr. Hillary's house and Mr. Hillary's garden seemed to have nestled into the shadiest and most verdant nook along the river-bank. It was called the Cedars, and it was a very old place, as any place so called should be. It was called the Cedars by virtue of the great trees whose spreading branches made patches of dense shadow on the lawn; and not by the caprice of a cockney builder, who christens his shelterless houses indifferently after the noblest trees of the forest. The house was an old red-brick mansion, long and low and irregular; and there is no kind of window invented for the admission of the light of heaven, and there is no species of blind devised by ingo-

nious artisan for the exclusion of that light when it becomes obnoxious, which did not adorn and diversify the glowing crimson of the façade. Oriel windows and Tudor windows; long French windows of violet-stained glass, tiny diamond-paned casements, and noble jutting-out bays; windows with balconies, and windows with verandas; striped linen blinds of crimson and white, and Venetian shutters of dazzling green; windows leading into conservatories, and windows opening into aviaries,—all combined to bewilder the eye of the stranger who stood upon the lawn by the river looking up at Mr. Hillary's mansion.

Perhaps there never had been any where else so many flowers, and birds, and gold-fish, and pet dogs, collected together in an area of two acres and a half. Banks of parti-coloured blossoms blazed in the sunshine on the lawn tier above tier, like the bonnets on the grand stand at Ascot on a cup-day; marble basins of limpid water and tiny trickling fountains twinkled and glittered in every direction; fragile colonnades of delicate ironwork, overhung with jasmine and clematis, honeysuckle

and myrtle-blossom, led away to bowery nooks upon the broad terrace by the river; and what with the perfume of a million flowers, the gurgling of blackbirds and thrushes, the carolling of sky-larks, the shrill whistling of a grove of canaries, the cooing of tropical love-birds, the screaming of paroquets, and the barking of half a dozen excited lap-dogs, the stranger, suddenly let loose in Mr. Hillary's river-side Eden, was apt to yield himself up for the moment to a state of confusion and bewilderment.

The place was in itself bewildering enough for the ordinary mind: without Miss Hillary—without Miss Hillary! But when Miss Hillary came sailing out of a drawing-room window, with diaphanous draperies of white and blue fluttering and spreading round her, and with all manner of yellow gold and purple enamel absurdities dangling at her wrists and depending from the loveliest throat and the pinkest ears in Christendom,—the stranger who was not provided with forty thousand a year and a coronet, the which to lay at the feet of that adorable creature, was

the weakest of fools if he did not take to his heels there and then, and fly from the Cedars, never to return thither. If he stayed, he fully deserved his fate. If, looking at Maude Hillary, and knowing that he could never hope to win her for his own, he did not straightway flee from that flowery paradise beside the sunlit river, all after-agonies endured by his luckless heart were only the natural consequence of his mad temerity. But then, unhappily, there are so many mad men in the world. Homburg and Baden-Baden are dangerous places, but there are crowds of deluded creatures who will haunt the dazzling halls of the Kursaal, and the elegant saloons of M. Benazet, so long as the fatal wheel revolves and the croupier cries, "Make your game, gentlemen, the game is made." What can be a more absurd spectacle than a big blundering moth whirling and fluttering about the flame of a candle? Yet the incineration of moth A will not be accepted as a warning by moth B, though he may be a witness of the sacrifice. Younger sons and briefless barristers, earning a fluctuating

income by the exercise of their talents in light literature; artists; curates, hopeless of rich preferment,—came, and saw, and were conquered. The man who, being a bachelor and under thirty years of age, beheld Maude Hillary, and did *not* fall in love with her, was made of sterner stuff than the rest of his race, and must have had in him the material for a Cromwell or a Robespierre. He must have been a stony, incorruptible, bilious creature, intended to hold iron sway over his fellow-men; and had no business in the paradise between Isleworth and Twickenham.

Shall I describe Maude Hillary as she sails across the lawn this July morning? I use the word 'sail,' as applied to this young lady's movements, advisedly; for there was a swimming, undulating motion in her walk, which was apt to remind one of a lovely white-sailed yacht gliding far out across an expanse of serene blue water on a summer's day. Shall I describe her? No; if I do, stern critics will tell me that she is a very commonplace young person after all, when it is only my description that will be common-

place. Her complexion was specially fair and bright; but it was not because of her fair skin that she was beautiful. Her features were delicate and harmonious; but those who admired her most could scarcely have told you whether her nose was nearer to the Grecian or the Roman type; whether her forehead was low or high, her chin round or pointed. She was bewitching, rather than beautiful. For if Paris awarded the apple on purely technical grounds, a thousand lovely English women might have disputed the prize with Maude Hillary. But I think Paris would have wished to give her the apple, if only for the pleasure of seeing her bright face light up into new radiance with the joy of her triumph; though in strict justice he might feel himself obliged to bestow the fruit elsewhere. Miss Hillary was bewitching; and people saw her, and fell in love with her, and bowed themselves down at her feet, long before they had time to find out that she was not so very beautiful after all.

She came winding in and out amongst the

flower-beds now, and betook herself towards an open temple at one end of the terrace by the river—a temple of slender marble columns, entwined with ivy and beautiful ephemeral parasites, whose gaudy blossoms relieved the sombre green. Two gentlemen, who were disporting themselves with lawn-billiards, deserted that amusement and strolled over to the temple. They went slowly enough, because they held it vulgar to be in a hurry, and they were very young, and very much used-up as to all the joys and sorrows and excitements of this earth; but they were over head and ears in love with Miss Hillary notwithstanding.

She was not alone. She never was alone. She had for her constant associates from four to half a dozen pet dogs, and Miss Julia Desmond, her companion. Miss Desmond was by no means the despised companion so popular in three-volume novels. She was a very dignified young lady, whose father had been a colonel in ever so many different armies. She was one of the Desmonds of Castle Desmond, near Limerick, and there were

three peerages in her family, to say nothing of one extinct earldom, forfeited by reason of high treason on the part of its possessor, the revival of which, for his own benefit, had been the lifelong dream of Patrick Macnamara Ryan O'Brien Desmond, until death let fall a curtain on that and many other fond delusions which had survived unchanged and changeless to the last in the eternal boyhood of an Irishman's nature.

Julia was a very dignified young lady, and had been highly educated in a Parisian convent, whence she had returned to the south of Ireland to find the impress of decay upon every object around her, from the grass-grown roofs of the cottages in the lane below the castle-boundary to the shattered figure of the brave old colonel. She returned in time to attend her father's death-bed, to which Lionel Hillary, his oldest friend and largest creditor, was summoned by an imploring letter from the old colonel. To Mr. Hillary the old man confided his penniless daughter. He had nothing to leave her but a set of old-fashioned garnet ornaments which had be-

longed to her mother, and to which he fondly alluded as the "fam'ly jools;" he had nothing to leave her except this antique trumpery and his blessing; but he confided her to his largest creditor, having a vague impression that the largeness of the debt and the heavy interest he *would* have given upon all the money lent him by his friend, had he ever lived to return the principal, laid Mr. Hillary under a kind of obligation to him. However it was, the London merchant promised to be a friend and protector to Julia Desmond; and as soon as the colonel's funeral was over carried her back to London with him, and established her in his own house, as the companion of his daughter. A young lady more or less was of little consequence in such an establishment as the Cedars; so the merchant thought very lightly of what he did for Miss Desmond, and Maude Hillary was delighted to have a friend who was to be her perpetual companion; a friend who could sing a good second to any duet, and was never out of time in "Blow, gentle gales," whensoever a masculine visitor with

a good bass organ was to be procured for the third in that delicious glee. The two girls drove together, and walked together, and rode together; and played duets on one piano and on two pianos, or a harp and piano; and went out together to make water-colour sketches of their favourite bends in the river, with very blue water, and very green willows, and a man in a scarlet jacket lazily pushing a ferry-boat away from the shore, and a Newfoundland dog, very black and white and spotty, lying on the bank.

Julia Desmond led a very pleasant life, and there were people who said that the colonel's daughter was a most fortunate person; but for Julia herself there was just one drop in the cup which was bitter enough to change the flavour of the entire draught. She was *not* Maude Hillary. That was Miss Desmond's grand grievance. She brooded over it sometimes when she brushed her hair of a night before the big looking-glass in her pretty chintz-curtained chamber at the Cedars. Maude had two cheval glasses that swung upon hinges at each side of her dressing-table, and

Maude had her own maid to brush her hair; but Julia was fain to smooth her own dark tresses. Miss Desmond thought of her grievance very often of a night, when she contemplated her face by the light of a pair of wax candles, and pondered upon the events of the day. She was not Maude Hillary. She was not sole heiress to one of the largest fortunes—so ran the common rumour—ever won by City merchant. She had not received half the attention that had been bestowed upon Miss Hillary during that day. And if not, why not? Was it because she was less good-looking? Certainly not. Miss Desmond was a handsome girl, with bold, striking features, and her black eyes flashed indignation upon the other eyes in the glass at the mere thought of any personal superiority on the part of Maude Hillary. Was it because she was less accomplished? No, indeed. Whose thumbs were the strongest and did most execution in a fantasia by Thalberg? Whose right little finger was clearest and steadiest in a prolonged shake? Whose figures in a water-coloured sketch stood firmest on their legs? Miss Desmond's, of course.

But Maude was rich, and Julia was poor; and the meanness of mankind was testified by the absurd devotion which they all exhibited for the heiress. Julia was really fond of Maude, and thought her tolerably pretty; but she did not comprehend the grand fact that Miss Hillary was one of the most fascinating of women, and that she herself was not. She was handsome and stylish, and accomplished and well-bred; but she was not bewitching. When Maude spoke in a friendly manner to any masculine acquaintance, he was apt to be seized with a mad impulse that prompted him to kiss her there and then, though eternal banishment from her divine presence would be his immediate doom. Even women had something of the same feeling when Miss Hillary talked to them; and perhaps this may be attributed to the fact that her mouth was the best and most expressive feature in her face. Such heavenly smiles, such innocently and unconsciously bewitching variations of expression played perpetually about those lovely rosy lips, that the harshest woman-hater might have been betrayed into the admission that amongst nature's

numerous mistakes Maude Hillary's creation was an inexcusable one. Fortune-hunters, who came with mercenary aspirations, remained to be sincere. Rich young stockbrokers, who speculated amongst themselves upon the extent of Lionel Hillary's wealth, would have gladly taken Maude to wife, "ex every thing." But Julia Desmond could not understand all this, and she regarded her benefactor's daughter as a feminine image of the golden calf, before which mercenary mankind bowed down in servile worship.

The two girls seated themselves in the little temple, and the worshippers came round and performed their homage. But Miss Hillary had more to say to her dogs than to the loungers on the lawn.

"Good morning, Captain Masters.—Floss, you are the naughtiest darling.—Haven't I told you once before, Scrub, that Honiton lace is *not* good to eat?—Papa has not come home yet, I suppose, Mr. Somerset?—That tiresome City makes a kind of orphan of me, doesn't it, Julia? We never have papa to go with us any where now, do we, Julia?

—No, Peasblossom, any thing but a locket with papa's hair in it. *That* must not be worried.—When are we to go to the *fête*, Captain Masters?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders. He was very young, and held every thing upon earth, except Maude, in supreme detestation and contempt.

"As from four to five is about the hottest period in the entire day, I believe the *fête* is supposed to be at its best somewhere between four and five," he said; "we manage these things so remarkably well in England."

"But as the Duke and Duchess are both French, I suppose the management of the *fête* at the Château de Bourbon is French too, isn't it?" asked Miss Desmond.

Maude was occupied with a Scotch terrier who was making ferocious snaps at the jasmine trailing from the roof above her. She would have made a charming subject for a modern Greuze, with the dog held up in her hands, and the loose white muslin sleeves falling back from those fair rounded arms in soft cloudy folds.

"The Duke and Duchess are very charming," said Mr. Somerset; "and when one thinks that if they had lived in seventeen ninety-three, instead of eighteen forty-eight, they'd have been inevitably guillotined on the Place Louis Quinze, instead of being comfortably settled in the neighbourhood of Isleworth, one feels an extraordinary kind of interest in them as living illustrations of the improvement of the times. But apart from that, Miss Hillary, don't you think the *fête* a bore? Don't you think any charity *fête* more or less a bore? I can understand people sending you a subscription list, and telling their man to wait in your hall till you write a cheque for them; but I can't understand people choosing the hottest day in a hot summer to parade about a garden grinning and smirking at one another, and giving exorbitant prices for things they don't want."

"But you mean to go to the *fête*, Mr. Somerset?"

"Most decidedly, if I am to have the honour of going with you—and Miss Desmond."

Miss Desmond, with one flash of her black

eyes, expressed her appreciation of the little pause that had preceded Mr. Somerset's mention of her name.

"Yes, I suppose we are to take you with us," Maude answered, with cruel carelessness. "Papa said that if he were not home at three, we were to go without him, and he would meet us at the château, — and it's past three now, I declare, Julia, and we're not dressed," added Miss Hillary, looking at her watch; "and papa is always so particular about punctuality. Wasn't it Lord Nelson who won the battle of Trafalgar through always being a quarter of an hour beforehand? I almost wish the French had beaten him, for then people couldn't have quoted him against one perpetually. Will you order the carriage, Julia dear? —or will you tell them about it, Mr. Somerset? The landau with the bays; papa said the bays were to be used to-day.—Now, Julia dear."

The two girls ran away to dress, and reappeared in about twenty minutes; Julia very splendid in a golden-brown silk dress and a pale pink bonnet; Miss Hillary in cloud-like garments of

lace, or tulle, or areophane, that were especially becoming to her tall slender figure and the fragile style of her beauty. Maude Hillary was a very extravagant young lady, and had *carte blanche* at Messrs. Howell and James's, on whose account her father was wont to write heavy cheques at long intervals, without any investigation of the items; but Miss Hillary very seldom wore silk dresses, which are, after all, about the most economical thing a lady can wear. She affected gauzy fabrics, all festoons and puffings and flounces, which were thrown aside for the profit of her maid after the third time of wearing, and ultimately figured in second-hand wardrobe repositories in the dreariest outskirts of Pimliconia. Indeed, one devoted admirer of Miss Hillary, penetrating Vauxhall bridge-wards from Eccleston Square, had been startled by the apparition of his lovely partner at a recent ball dangling limply, rosebuds and all, from a peg in a dingy shop-window.

Maude was very extravagant; but then how could she well be otherwise? Her appreciation of

"pounds" was very little above that of Mr. Harold Skimpole. She very rarely had any money; if she wanted shillings, she borrowed them—by the handful—of the housekeeper at the Cedars. But, on the other hand, she had unlimited credit almost every where. A beggar, or one of the church-wardens of Isleworth armed with a plate after a charity-sermon, were about the only persons who ever demanded ready money from her. She had a vague idea that there was no limit to her father's wealth, and that she was to have as much of it as she required for her own uses whenever she married, if he approved of her marriage; and if he did not approve, she would not have the money, and would be poor, and live in a pretty cottage somewhere in the neighbourhood of St. John's Wood, without so much as a pair of ponies to drive in the Park. She looked forward very vaguely to this sort of thing, always believing that the most indulgent of fathers would come by and bye to smile upon penniless Harcourt Lowther, and that every thing would end happily, as it does in a comedy. She sighed now and then, and told her

confidante, Julia, that she was the most miserable of creatures when she thought of poor dear Harcourt slaving himself to death in that dreadful Van Diemen's Land; but, on the whole, she bore her separation from her affianced lover with considerable resignation. Was she not by nature a bright and hopeful creature? and had she not from babyhood inhabited a kind of fairy circle, separated from all the common outer world by a golden boundary, sheltered from every rude breath of heaven by a limitless canopy of bank-notes?

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE CHATEAU DE BOURBON.

THE château in which some of the banished descendants of Louis the Great had set up their household gods, in the shape of a most exquisite collection of artistic treasures, was only a mile or so distant from Mr. Hillary's house. It was an old red-brick mansion like the Cedars; and, indeed, the banks of the Thames seem specially rich in red-brick mansions of the early Georgian period. It was a noble old house, and had extended itself of late years on either side, until it was almost palatial of aspect. It was a very pretty house, filled to overflowing with art-treasures, about almost every one of which there hung a history as interesting as the object itself. Royalty, the banished royalty of France, inhabited that simple suburban mansion; and on the smooth lawn,

where the pennants were flying and the band playing, a quiet-looking gentleman moved about among the visitors, whose grave and noble face was the exact reproduction of another face, to be seen in stained marble under a glass case within the mansion;—the face of a gentleman who, in the course of an adventurous career, won some little distinction under the style and title of Henry IV., King of France and Navarre.

It was almost like going back into the past for an hour or so to lounge on that sunny lawn at Twickenham, so strange yet so familiar were some of the names that were heard on the lips of the crowd. There was a mournful kind of interest in those historic titles; and the aspect of the pretty flower-festooned marquees, where elegant women were charging fabulous prices for all manner of absurdities in the way of Berlin wool, recalled the image of tented plains and fields of cloth-of-gold, in the days when the sons of St. Louis had other and more high-sounding business in this world than such gentle works of charity as occupied them pleasantly enough to-day.

Maude Hillary was in her glory in the gardens of the Château de Bourbon. She had plenty of ready money, for once in a way; a crisp little bundle of five-pound notes, which her father had brought from the City on the previous evening; and she distributed her wealth freely among the fashionable stall-keepers, loading herself and her attendant cavaliers with wax dolls and Berlin wool-work, reticules, antimacassars, painted fire-screens, bottles of toilette vinegar, and feather flowers. She knew a great many people, and she was so bright, and animated, and happy-looking, that people who were utter strangers to her watched her with a feeling of interest, and asked one another who she was. She was standing amidst a group of aristocratic acquaintance upon the terrace overlooking the river, when she cried out that her papa had arrived, and ran away to meet him, leaving Julia Desmond and the two young men behind her.

"An hour after your time, papa," she said, putting both her hands into his; "and I've spent all my money, and I've bought these for you."

She flourished a pair of gorgeously embroidered slippers before his eyes, and then put her arm through his with an air of proprietorship that was as charming as—every thing else she did.

Lionel Hillary, Australian merchant, of Moorgate Street, London, was a handsome-looking man, tall, and stout, and dark, with iron-gray hair and whiskers, and very unlike his daughter in every respect; for the happy brightness which was the chief element of her beauty found no reflection in his face. He looked very grave and a little careworn; and Maude, watching him closely, said presently,

"I'm afraid you have one of your headaches again to-day, papa?"

"Yes, my dear; I've been working rather hard this morning. Let me introduce you to this gentleman, whom I have induced to come and spend a little of his money for the benefit of the Duchess's poor people."

This gentleman was Mr. Francis Tredethlyn, who had been loitering a little in the rear of Lionel Hillary while the merchant talked to his

daughter. The two men had become acquainted with each other in the simplest possible manner. Amongst the property Francis Tredethlyn had inherited from his uncle was a bundle of shares in a certain Australian insurance company of which Mr. Hillary was a director. Francis, wanting to make some inquiry about the shares, had been advised to go to Mr. Hillary, and had done so. He found the merchant very cordial and friendly,—he had found a great many people in these dispositions towards him lately,—and with the frankness natural to him had told a good deal of his story to that gentleman; always avoiding any allusion to his cousin Susan. Lionel Hillary, being much pleased with his manner, and being generally very kind and hospitable to any young men who came in his way, had offered to drive his new acquaintance down to Twickenham.

"You must find London miserably dull at this time of year," he said. "There's a *fête*, or a fancy-fair, or something of that kind, our way. I'll drive you down, and you shall dine at my place afterwards."

Thus it was that Francis Tredethlyn found himself upon the lawn before the Château de Bourbon, making what he felt to be a very awkward bow, and most heartily wishing that some convulsion of nature might open a ready-made grave in the smooth turf on which he stood, wherein he might hide himself from the bright eyes of Miss Hillary.

She spoke to him in the easiest, friendliest manner; asked him if he had ever been at the château before; if he liked a fancy-fair; hoped he meant to spend EVER so much money. She opened her eyes very wide as she said this, and he saw how blue they were, and then felt an actual blush kindling under his brown skin. Such a woman as this had never before walked by his side, talking to him and smiling at him. He answered her animated inquiries as best he might, and found himself thinking of all manner of incongruous things,—of Maude Hillary's blue eyes and point-lace parasol, of his own awkwardness and ignorance, of the narrow points of her dove-coloured boots, as they peeped from under her

dress now and then, like any thing in the world you like *except* Sir John Suckling's mice, of the old farmhouse on the Cornish moorland, of little Susy in a white-dimity sun-bonnet.

He had never been in such a place before, mixing on equal terms with well-dressed men and women, about most of whom even he, in despite of his ignorance, recognised a nameless something that stamped them as superior to the common run of well-dressed people. That in itself was enough to bewilder him. He had never before seen such a woman as Maude Hillary; and even experienced young men from Government offices found Maude Hillary bewildering. He felt terribly embarrassed and out of place; and after undergoing a sharp ordeal on the terrace, where he was introduced to Miss Desmond and to the two young men staying at the Cedars, he was not a little rejoiced to find himself free for a few minutes, while Mr. Hillary and his daughter talked to a group of new arrivals. He strolled away to the end of the terrace, and lounged upon the marble balustrade, looking down at a lane below—a kind of gorge cut

through two separate gardens, in which some of the common folks of the neighbourhood were gathered, listening to the music of the band, and staring at the splendid line of carriages waiting for the guests in the gardens above.

"I didn't think I was such a fool as to let my brains be muddled like this by a lot of fine dresses and parasols, and flower-beds, and the playing of a brass band," he thought; "they're flesh and blood, those people, I suppose, like the rest of us. *She's* flesh and blood, just as much as my mother that's dead and gone, or poor little Susy. But when I looked at her just now, it seemed as if there was a light shining all about her somehow, that almost blinded me. She spoke to me as prettily and as kindly as she spoke to her father; and yet I felt more afraid of her than if she'd been my uncle Oliver, and I a little boy again tumbling down his corn in the valley farm."

He moved a little way from the balustrade, and stood looking rather sheepishly towards the group he had left, doubtful whether he was expected to rejoin them or to stroll about by himself,

amusing himself as he pleased. He would have given a great deal of money for the poorest treatise on etiquette which would have told him as much as this; and in the mean time he lingered where he was, twirling a very big pair of lavender gloves which he had bought—through the agency of Mr. Hillary's groom, and with no reference to their adaptability to his own hands—on the way down.

Lingering thus, doubtful of himself, and painfully conscious of being very much out of keeping with the scene around him, he still thought of all manner of incongruous things; and among other fancies one special thought, which could have had no possible connection with the events of the day, kept surging upwards on the troubled sea of his reflections.

"I never loved my cousin Susan," he thought; "I know now that I never really loved my cousin Susan."

CHAPTER IX.

JULIA DESMOND MAKES HERSELF AGREEABLE.

Captain Masters drove Lionel Hillary's phaeton to the Cedars, when the crowd in the sunny gardens before the Château de Bourbon had dispersed, and only a few scattered groups still lingered about the pleasant home of exiled royalty. Amongst which loiterers might be observed some lively gentlemen of the occasional-reporter species, who wanted to ascertain whether there would not be something in the champagne and lobster-salad way before the *fête* was finished. Captain Masters drove his friend Mr. Somerset back to the Cedars in the mail phaeton, while Lionel Hillary and Francis Tredethlyn went home with the ladies in the landau.

The man who had been a private soldier only a few months before that day, and who had not

yet been able to realise the change made in his position by the inheritance of thirty thousand a year, found himself oppressed by a strange feeling as he sat in Miss Hillary's open carriage with his back to the horses, surrounded by billows of silk and lace and muslin, a surging sea of feminine draperies, from which a faint perfume was wafted towards him as the summer wind blew in his face. It was not so much that he was ill at ease in that feminine presence, or in any way daunted by the fire of two pairs of handsome eyes. The feeling which oppressed him was rather a sense of unreality. He was like a child at a pantomime, who sees a stage-fairy for the first time, and cannot believe that the resplendent creature is only flesh and blood. He looked at Maude Hillary, and thought of his cousin Susan's rosy cheeks and brown hair shaded by the familiar dimity sunbonnet. There were men in the world who might aspire to marry such a creature as this Miss Hillary. He tried to imagine the sort of man who might lift his eyes to that divinity; and there arose in his mind the picture of a grandiose crea-

ture with yellow whiskers and a geranium in his button-hole. The æsthetic element in Mr. Tredethlyn's mind was as yet very imperfectly developed; and his idea of a lover befitting Maude Hillary leaned rather to the gaudy king's-pattern order of mankind.

The Australian merchant sat with his head leaning back against the cushions of the carriage and his eyes closed. His headache was, if any thing, worse, he confessed, in answer to Maude's anxious inquiries. He did not speak three times during the homeward drive, and his daughter rarely took her eyes from his face. She was very fond of him, and displayed her affection for him now as frankly as she had done when she had been a little girl in a white frock, sitting on his knee after dinner, and eating unwholesome fruits and confections out of his plate. She watched him now with a tender anxiety in her face, and seemed almost unconscious of the presence of the big soldier-like individual with a bronzed countenance and close-cropped black hair. But Francis Tredethlyn was not entirely neglected, for Miss Des-

mond appeared determined to atone for Maude's want of courtesy. She had heard the Cornishman's story from Mr. Somerset, who had heard it from a gentleman whom he described as "a fellow in the 11th Hussars;" and the handsome Julia felt some little interest in the hero of the narrative. An ignorant young man, a farmer's son, who has suddenly come into a fortune of thirty thousand a year, is not the sort of person to be met with every day. Julia remembered that dreary ruin, that tall stone gaol on the bare hill beyond Limerick, which sounded so well when casually alluded to as Castle Desmond; but whose image chilled her as it rose, dismal and stony, before her mind's eye. She remembered the muddy roads, the murderous ruts, the broad acres of irredeemable bog, the long rank grass waving on the roofs of tumble-down stone cabins, the gaunt pigs and gaunter peasantry; and a feeling that was not altogether ignoble kindled a sudden flush upon her handsome face. What could not be done for Castle Desmond and those illused peasantry by a chieftainess who should have thirty thousand a year at her command!

She fancied herself a kind of fairy queen, beneath whose wand pleasant homesteads might arise on those desolate hills, and yellow corn-fields spread a golden mantle over the valleys now so bare and empty. Miss Desmond's lot in life was altogether exceptional, and the sentimental dreams which come to some young women had no lodgment in her brain. She looked her fate straight in the face, and was eager to make the best of any opportunity that might fall in her way. For the present she was very well off where she was; though the worship of the golden calf, as represented by Maude Hillary, was a perpetual abomination to her. But she was tolerably resigned to her present position at the Cedars. It was only in the future that her life looked dark and threatening. She must marry before Miss Hillary,—that was essential,—or else she must resign herself to the miserable position of a companion on sufferance, necessary to Maude perhaps, but very disagreeable to Maude's husband.

Under these circumstances, a chance visitor at the Cedars with thirty thousand a year for his

fortune was not a person to be disdainfully entreated even by the daughter of all the Desmonds: so Julia was very kind to Francis Tredethlyn during that brief homeward drive, asked him all manner of questions respecting his sentiments upon things in general and the charity *fête* in particular, and flashed her handsome eyes and white teeth upon him until he was almost dazzled by their brightness. Miss Desmond had very dark eyes—eyes that seemed of a greenish hazel when you saw them in repose, but which looked almost black when they sparkled athwart a fringe of dusky lashes. She had dark eyes and very white teeth; and the distinguishing characteristic of her face was the contrast between the darkness of one and the white glitter of the other. Mr. Tredethlyn knew that the young lady was very handsome, and that there was some condescension involved in her friendly notice of him; but his eyes wandered away to Maude's fair face and earnest blue eyes, and there was a suspicion of irrelevance in some of his replies to Miss Desmond's animated questions. If he had been less

absent-minded, he might have seen that young lady's white teeth close vengefully upon her lower lip as she turned from him after one of those doubtful answers.

The dinner at the Cedars went off very quietly. Mr. Hillary was silent, but hospitable, or at least as much so as a man can be in these days of Russian dinners and vicarious hospitality. Francis had lodged at a comfortable hotel in the regions of Covent Garden since his return from Cornwall, and had in no way altered his simple habits of life; so he was not a little puzzled by the array of glasses by the side of his plate, the lumps of ice which an obsequious attendant dropped ever and anon into his Moselle, the mysterious compounds in silver dishes which he discovered suddenly at his elbow whenever he was most abstracted by the novelty of the scene about him, and the vision of Maude Hillary, sitting on the other side of the round table in a cloud of white and blue. The dishes at that wonderful feast seemed so many culinary conundrums to Mr. Tredethlyn, and I fear that he made some very

obvious mistakes in the management of the spoons and forks perpetually thrust upon him by the stealthy-footed retainers. But the dinner was over at last, and Captain Masters opened the dining-room door for the departure of the ladies, while poor Francis could only sit blankly staring like a countryman at a play. Lionel Hillary did not linger long over his wine; he had some papers to look at in his study, he said, and excused himself on that ground, as well as on account of that obstinate headache of his. The young men seemed very glad to be released from the atmosphere of hothouse flowers and pine-apple, faintly mingled with that odour of the bygone dinner which will hang round the most elegant dining-room, ventilate it as you will. Was not Maude Hillary in the drawing-room, whence already might be heard the sparkling ripple of arpeggio passages upon the piano? The two young loungers followed Mr. Hillary out into the hall, and Francis went with them, uncomfortably conscious of disadvantages not to be outbalanced by the possession of half a million or so in all manner of seven-per-cent-pay-

ing investments. The young soldier blacking his master's boots had been the easiest-mannered of mankind; but Oliver Tredethlyn's heir felt terribly embarrassed in Maude Hillary's presence,—only in her presence; he was not at all abashed by Miss Desmond's eyes and teeth, though all their contrastive brightness was brought to bear upon him. Maude was at the piano, and Julia was bending over a stand of engravings. It may be that she had not very long fallen into that graceful attitude. When the three young men entered the room she looked up, and Mr. Tredethlyn meeting her friendly glance, and being considerably at a loss what to do with himself, went over to her, and found a comfortable haven in a low easy-chair near the couch on which she was sitting.

"Do you care much for Leech, Mr. Tredethlyn?" she asked, as she turned over the leaves of a portfolio reprinted from *Punch*.

The young man looked rather puzzled by this question.

"I don't care much for them," he answered, frankly. "I never had any but once, and that

was in Van Diemen's Land, when I had the fever, —fifteen of them on my temples, and that was no joke, you know, Miss Desmond."

He was quite at his ease with Julia; but he would not for the world have been so confidential to Maude Hillary. Miss Desmond laughed good-naturedly.

"I don't mean those horrible creatures that they put on one's temples," she exclaimed, "but Mr. John Leech the caricaturist. You must have seen *Punch*, even in Van Diemen's Land?"

"Oh, yes! my mas—superior officer, used to get it from his mother every mail."

He took the portfolio from Miss Desmond and turned over the leaves: but he only stared absently at Mr. Leech's most brilliant performances, and his eyes wandered away every now and then to the piano, where Maude Hillary was skimming through the gems of a new opera and dallying with her two adorers, deliciously unconscious of their adoration. Had she not inhabited an atmosphere of universal admiration and affection ever since she had exhibited her pink cheeks and infantile ring-

lets in company with the seven-shilling March peaches and five-guinea pine-apples, after her father's pompous dinners, to be admired by ponderous old City magnates in the pauses of solemn discussions upon the rate of discount and the last grand crash on the Stock Exchange?

Julia Desmond, always observant—cursed perhaps with an especial faculty for penetrating all unpleasant secrets lying hidden under the many masks which society has invented for the convenience of mankind,—Miss Desmond, I say, was not slow to perceive the Cornishman's pre-occupation, nor slow to credit Miss Hillary with another item in that heavy account so long standing between them.

"Even this country boor, with a great fortune of his own, must pay his meed of homage to the millionaire's daughter," thought Julia. "Is there some magical power in the possession of money, which imparts a kind of fascination to the possessor?" Colonel Desmond's daughter had felt some of the keenest stings of poverty, and it may be that she had grown to entertain an ex-

become a thread, however slightly interwoven, in the fabric of her destiny, Julia expended her brightest smiles and sweetest words for his gratification.

It was in no way strange, therefore, that the young lady who had given a good deal of attention to hare-brained young ensigns, and penniless young curates with nothing better than remote expectations, should consider Mr. Tredethlyn worthy of her most serious deliberation. The present, however, was no time for thought,—for were not the young man's eyes perpetually wandering towards the slender figure under the light of the moderator lamp? Miss Desmond felt there was no time to be lost. Already the rich man had made his election —already he had enrolled himself in the list of Maude Hillary's victims. Another woman, perceiving the state of affairs, might have resigned herself to the loss of this grand chance of winning a rich husband; but Julia's courage was not so easily dashed. It rose, rather, with the thought of contest. Had not her father been a grand old freebooter, boasting of kingly blood in his battered old body, and spilling it under the

colours of every rebel army in modern Europe? The Desmond spirit rose in Julia's breast as she saw Francis Tredethlyn's wandering glances, half sheepish, half unconscious.

"I can set myself against her this time," she thought; "and the battle between us will be a fair one. *This* man cannot be a fortune-hunter. We meet on tolerably equal terms for once in a way, Miss Hillary; and let us see who will win."

Julia's dark eyes flashed their brightest as she looked across all the width of the room to the radiant-looking girl at the piano; and then she turned them suddenly upon Francis Tredethlyn, and began to talk to him. She began to talk to him, and, more than this, she made him listen to her. Miss Desmond was a brilliant talker. She possessed that wondrous faculty vulgarly called the gift of the gab,—the power of talking about every thing and any thing, or even about nothing, for the matter of that;—the power of enchaining a listener in spite of himself, holding him prisoner when he had rather be away, and yet not detaining him an altogether unwilling prisoner;—the

power of talking ignorantly, without seeming to be ignorant; speculating ideas and allusions at a venture, and never betraying the shallowness of their nature; assuming an interest in the most uninteresting subject, and never revealing the hollowness of the assumption,—a power, in short, which in its fascination seems like a modern form of those classic philtres which Roman maidens were wont to administer to eligible bachelors in the days when Rome was young. It may be said that Miss Desmond owed this faculty in some degree to her Hibernian ancestry; but no suspicion of their native accent vulgarised her discourse. Only a softer and richer depth in her low voice betrayed her Celtic origin.

Julia began to talk to Francis Tredethlyn, and, in spite of himself, he listened, and was fain to withdraw his gaze from the distant figure at the piano. She talked to him of a soldier's life, jumping recklessly at conclusions, and taking it for granted that he must needs possess some latent spark of military ardour, which would blaze up into a flame under the fire of her enthusiasm.

She talked to him of her father, and all those guerrilla warfares in which he had won distinction. She talked of Don Carlos, and Abd-el-Kader, and Garibaldi, whose name had not then the glorious significance which it carries with it to-day. She talked to him like a young Joan of Arc or an embryo maid of Saragosa;—and all that was brightest in Mr. Tredethlyn's nature kindled beneath her influence. Had Francis been a stock-broker, Miss Desmond would have discoursed to him of Lionel Rothschild, or Lafitte, or Mirès; and she would have glowed with ust the same enthusiasm, though her theme had been the Stock Exchange or the Bourse.

But in spite of himself Mr. Tredethlyn was pleased and interested. His boyish yearning for a military career had been very nearly trampled out of him during dreary years of marchings and counter-marchings, and sword-exercise, and barrack tyranny, with never the glimpse of a battle-field, or so much as a brief skirmish with some chance enemy. But those fresh young feelings all came back to him when Julia discoursed in low

eloquent accents of her father's foreign experiences. "Ah, that was something like a military career!" thought the young man. "It was such a life that I hoped to lead when I ran away from Landresdale; and I thought I should come back a general, with a cocked-hat and a great plume of feathers, as the gardener's son does in the play I saw once at Falmouth."

And then Francis Tredethlyn, being by nature candid as a schoolboy newly come home for his holidays, opened his heart to Miss Desmond, and told her a good deal about his life. That dark chamber of his memory in which Susan's imago loomed through the sombre shadows he kept religiously sealed from every curious eye. But on all other subjects he was very communicative. He did not tell Julia that he had been Mr. Lowther's body-servant; for there was something in that estate of servitude which had never been entirely pleasant to him, gallantly as he had borne himself under its serious ordeals. He had known poverty, he told Miss Desmond, in all its worst bitterness, and had seen his mother and father die broken-

hearted, borne down by a load of petty debt and difficulty, when the loan of a couple of hundred pounds would have saved them.

"I felt altogether desperate one night, Miss Desmond," he said, "when my poor mother was at her worst, and my father sitting in the kitchen as helpless as a child,—almost daft, as they say in the north. I felt desperate somehow, and I went out of the house and ran all the way to Tredethlyn Grange, and asked my uncle Oliver to lend me the money. He laughed in my face, Miss Desmond, and told me he hadn't a five-pound note in the house, and I daresay he spoke the truth, for I think he'd have gone half crazy at the thought of a sovereign lying idle. I went back to the farm, and—my mother died the next day."

He stopped, and sat for some minutes looking at Mr. Hillary's Axminster carpet. Julia did not say any thing. She was too perfect a tactician not to know that any thing she could say must appear commonplace at such a moment. She only drew a long breath, a kind of fluttering sigh, expressive of the deepest sympathy.

"My mother died, Miss Desmond," the young man went on; "and my father was not slow to follow her. So, having no one in the world to care for, except—except a cousin, who had been like a sister to me, I ran away to Falmouth, and enlisted in a foot regiment, thinking that I had but to pin a bunch of colours in my hat and march straight off to some field of battle. I left Cornwall, Miss Desmond; but I never forgot that night before my mother's death. I've tried to feel grateful to my uncle Oliver for leaving me this fortune, but I can't. I ought to feel grateful, I suppose; but I can't. The memory of that night sours me somehow. Money seems such paltry stuff, after all, when you think that all the golden coin in this world can't bring back one human creature from the grave."

"Ah, yes, indeed," Miss Desmond murmured, in her tenderest voice.

And then, being blest with a very lively imagination, she found herself wondering whether, if wealth had been potent to restore the dead, and she had been possessed of wealth, she would have

very much cared to awaken Patrick Macnamara Ryan O'Brien Desmond from his quiet slumber in a little churchyard beside the winding Shannon. The old soldier of fortune was better in his grave perhaps, Julia thought, philosophically. She had begun to fight the battle of life on her own tactics, and had no very great opinion of her late father's strategy.

"He was very clever," she thought, with a tender remembrance of the Major's best manœuvres; "but then one so often saw through him. He always started with wrong premises, and fancied every one but himself was a fool: as if there could be any merit in deceiving only stupid people." Miss Desmond was always wise enough to remember that the larger art of talking well comprehends the smaller art of listening gracefully. She was not one of those obnoxious people who talk for the sake of talking; and who, after rattling on without a full-stop for half an hour at a stretch, will stare vacantly at you while you recite to them some interesting adventure, evidently thinking of what they mean to say next, and wait-

ing for the chance of cutting in. Julia Desmond talked with a purpose,—not because she wanted to talk, but because she wished to please: and now she listened to Francis Tredethlyn with an unfailing show of sympathy and interest, that beguiled him on to tell her more and more. She wound and insinuated herself into his confidence as a beautiful serpentine creature winds itself into the heart of an apparently impenetrable forest; and before the evening was finished Mr. Tredethlyn found himself almost as intimate with this splendid southern Irishwoman as if she had been his sister. She had set him completely at his ease; so that he no longer felt out of place in Mr. Hillary's gorgeous rooms: and when the merchant, coming into the drawing-room at eleven o'clock, very pale and worn-looking, asked him to dine at the Cedars on the following Sunday, Francis unhesitatingly accepted the invitation. He stole just one glance at Maude as he did so; but she was in the act of exhibiting one of the newest accomplishments of a mouse-coloured Skye terrier for the edification of the two young loungers, and she

was quite unconscious of that shy look from Mr. Tredethlyn's eyes. He went to her presently to wish her good-night, and the spell of her gracious presence dazed and bewildered him, to the cost of the mouse-coloured terrier, upon whose silky paws he trampled in his embarrassment; and then, essaying to shake hands in a gentlemanly manner, he forgot what a stalwart giant he was, and squeezed the little hand that rested so lightly in his, until Maude's fingers were wounded by the hoops, and clusters, and hearts, and crescents of diamonds and opals which twinkled and flashed upon them, — for Miss Hillary had seen the Marchioness of Londonderry's famous rings, and never wore any vulgar mixture of many-coloured jewels upon her pretty white hands. Francis lingered a little after saying good-night, helpless under the spell of the enchantress, and then made his way somehow or other out of the room. Ah! surely uncle Oliver's money was not such sordid dross, after all, when it was the golden key which admitted him to that paradise on the banks of the Thames.

CHAPTER X.

COLTONSLOUGH.

Francis Tredethlyn went back to his hotel in Covent Garden after that quiet dinner at the Cedars, and his mind was full of the new images suggested by that brief glimpse of a life that was strange to him. He had been very much interested by Miss Desmond, and he tried to believe that he preferred her to Maude Hillary. Had she not been kinder to him, more friendly and familiar? and was it not reasonable that he should like her the better of the two? He was naturally of a grateful disposition, disposed to think meanly of his own merits, and he attributed all Miss Desmond's kindness to the purest promptings of a benevolent disposition. The idea that the young lady had regarded him from a speculative point of view, that she had entertained any notion of pos-

sible marriage contracts and settlements, by which she might acquire the use of his thirty thousand per annum, never for a moment entered Mr. Tredethlyn's mind. He knew, in a general way, that he was admitted to Mr. Hillary's drawing-room because his money gave him a kind of right to such society as that of the merchant's household; but he never for a moment imagined that any one of these delightful and high-bred creatures could contemplate any contingency by which his money might become of service to them. Wealth and beauty, elegance and refinement, seemed to find their natural home at the Cedars. Miss Desmond of course was rich, like Miss Hillary.

Francis counted the days which must elapse before that delightful Sabbath to be spent by him at the Cedars. Only three days, and during those three days stern duty called him away from London. Had he not declared himself ready to go to the end of the world in search of his cousin Susan Tredethlyn? He felt ashamed even of that one wasted day on the banks of the Thames. He had left his hotel in the morning, intending to des-

patch his City business with all possible speed, and start immediately afterwards for Coltonslough. He had found out all about Coltonslough by means of all manner of inquiries, for it seemed rather an out-of-the-way place, known to very few people as yet. Indeed, Coltonslough turned out to be a recently discovered watering-place on the Essex coast, a place whose shores were supposed to be washed by the salt waves of the ocean; but the waste of waters that rolled along the muddy shores of Coltonslough was only an ocean in its hobbledehoyhood, and savoured too much of the Thames and Medway to be considered a full-grown sea.

To the traveller who has grown familiar with the centre of Africa; to that bold explorer who has spent lonely days and nights amidst those darksome forests in which the forgotten cities of America lie buried; to the prisoner newly released from solitary confinement in the great prison-house of New York, so pleasantly entitled the Tombs,—to one of these a newly discovered watering-place may not appear dull. He who has

been used to hear no more familiar voice than the distant cry of the bittern, far away amongst the swampy wildernesses, may endure Herne Bay and live. The criminal who has undergone a decade of solitary confinement in the Tombs may possibly survive a month at Southend: but to the ordinary mind there is a modern abomination of desolation lurking in the unfinished terraces of a budding watering-place, or in a watering-place which has put forth its tender blossoms in the way of bow-windowed receptacles for the concentrated bleakness of perpetual east winds, and has been blighted in the bud.

Coltonslough was very young; it was in the most infantine stage of watering-place existence. Speculative builders had bought half a dozen plots of swamp and mud, and had erected dismal rows of houses, which turned their backs upon one another, and started off at right angles from one another, in utter contempt for all uniformity. If the melancholy sojourner at Coltonslough was of an active turn of mind, he was apt to be tormented by a wild desire to pull down and re

arrange those straggling terraces, between which stretched hideous deserts of waste ground, with here and there a lurking pitfall, whence gravel, or sand, or clay, or chalk, had been dug by unknown persons, who seemed always digging something or other out of Coltonslough, whereby an appearance of volcanic disruption was imparted to a place whose chief merit had been its agreeable flatness.

It was very young. A few straggling excursionists came on the blazing summer Sundays, and prowled about the shore with countenances expressive of supreme disappointment and disgust. Half a dozen families of cockney children were wont to congregate by the dismal waters every summer, provided with baskets for the collection of shells—and there were no shells at Coltonslough,—and further provided with woodon spades for the undermining of sand—and there was no sand at that baby watering-place. Families did certainly come, beguiled by representations of impossibly cheap provisions, though the place was in reality very expensive, for every tradesman was a

monopolist on a small scale. Families came, but no family ever came a second time to Coltonslough; and it may be that, in the wonderful scheme of the universe, this new-born watering-place was not without its special use; inasmuch as it made people contented with London. The inhabitant of Bermondsey, returning to that locality after a sojourn at Coltonslough, found beauties in some dismal street which until that hour had appeared to his prosaic mind a street, and nothing more. The denizen of Ratcliff Highway sat down amongst his household gods well pleased with a neighbourhood which, although not unobjectionable, was a paradise as compared with Coltonslough.

It was to this place of desolation that a newly-finished offshoot of the railway then known as the Eastern Counties conveyed Francis Tredethlyn. He went to look for his cousin, with no better clue to help him in his search than that one word, "Coltonslough," copied from the post-mark of Susan's letter.

"But I won't be baffled," the young man

thought, as he sat in the railway carriage thinking of the task that lay before him; "Coltonslough may be a big place, but I'll question every living creature in it before I'll give up the chance of finding out something about my cousin."

Luckily for Mr. Tredethlyn's chances, Coltonslough was a very small place, and after walking backwards and forwards for some quarter of an hour, before the emporium of the one butcher; the solitary baker, who dabbled a little in the fruit and confectionery line; and the single grocer, who was also a linendraper; and beyond that a stationer, who had a side of bacon hanging on one side of his door, and a piece of showy cotton stuff upon the other, and who moreover was sole master of the Coltonslough post-office,— Francis determined upon his plan of action. He had thought of his cousin very constantly in the few days before his visit to Mr. Hillary's mansion; he had thought of her a great deal since then, though he had not found it quite so easy to concentrate his ideas by reason of a certain bright face, and slender figure all in a flutter of white

and blue, that would sometimes intrude themselves upon his meditations.

Francis knew that his uncle's daughter had left Tredethlyn Grange with only a few sovereigns in her pocket, perhaps not much more than enough to defray her journey to London. Without money, without friends, she had fled from her home, and had not perished; but had lived to write to her father from this dismal watering-place of Coltonslough some years after her flight. It was clear, therefore, that in the interim she must have either been supported by the benevolence of strangers, or she must have earned her own living. The last hypothesis was the more likely to be correct. Susan Tredethlyn had been educated to habits of industry, and had no doubt confronted the battle of life as fearlessly as any Tredethlyn should confront any battle.

"Poor little girl! she went out as a servant, I daresay," thought the young man. "She drudged and slaved for some hard mistress perhaps, while her father was adding every day to the money that has come to me—to me—and he refused me

a couple of hundred pounds the night my mother was dying."

Mr. Tredethlyn went in at the grocer's doorway. There was scarcely room enough for him to pass between the bacon and the cotton stuff, which some aboriginal of Coltonslough would some day transform into wearing apparel. The postmaster was chopping some very sallow-hued lump-sugar in the dusky inner-regions of the shop; but he left off chopping, and advanced to meet the stranger.

Francis Tredethlyn was no diplomatist; he was quite unskilled in that peculiar science known as beating about the bush; so he began to make inquiries respecting his cousin with as little preface as he would have employed had he been asking for a pound of sugar.

"I'm a stranger in this place," he said, "and I want to ask a few questions; and I fancy, as you're postmaster, you must be about the likeliest person to answer them."

The grocer rubbed his hands and smirked, in a manner that was expressive of a general desire

to do any thing obliging—of course with an eye to ultimate profit.

"A young woman—a relation of mine—left her home four years ago this month. For three years no one belonging to her could discover where she was. At the end of that time a letter was received from her, bearing the post-mark of this place. I want to find out whether she is still here; or, if not, when she left. I have only just come back from Van Diemen's Land, to find things changed in the place that was once my home. So I'm groping in the dark, you see, and shall be very thankful to any one that'll lend me a helping hand."

Something in the frankness of his manner, the earnestness of his face, went straight home to the heart of the Coltonslough postmaster, who became less a tradesman, and more a man.

"It's rather puzzling, you see, in the way you put it," he said, scratching his nose meditatively. "You want a young woman who wrote a letter—or leastways had a letter posted at this place. But, lor' bless you, not being under Go-

vernment y'rself, you see, you've no notion of the dodges they're up to when they want to throw any one off the scent like with a post-mark. You mustn't fancy a person's in this place or in that place, because you happen to get a letter from them with such and such a post-mark. Why, I dessay I could get a letter posted from Jericho to-morrow morning, if I only gave my mind to it. What might be the name of the young woman as you're anxious to find?"

"Her name is Tredethlyn," Francis answered, hopelessly; "but as she ran away from home, and most likely wanted to hide herself from her relations, she may have changed her name."

The postmaster mused for a few moments, and then shook his head gravely.

"I never heard of no Tredevillings in Coltonslough," he said. "The young person was independent in her circumstances, I suppose?"

"Oh no, indeed! she had very little money when she left home. She must have worked for her living. I should think it likely she went out as a servant; for she was a country-bred girl, and

had been used to a hard life, though her father was a very rich man."

A very rich man! That part of the business sounded interesting, and the grocer pricked up his ears.

"A country-bred young person," he repeated, "by the name of Tredevillane. And what might be the date of the letter with the Coltonslough post-mark?"

Francis did not know the exact date. He could only inform the postmaster that the letter must have reached Cornwall about eighteen months, or it might be rather less than eighteen months, before the present time.

"Cornwall!" cried the postmaster; "then the country-bred young woman was a Cornwall young woman?"

"Yes, my cousin, Susan Tredethlyn, was a Cornish woman."

"A Cornish woman, and by the name of Susan! Why, if you'd put the date of the letter a good three years back instead of a year and a half, I should have been able to lay my hand

upon y'r cousin there and then, in a manner of speaking."

"How so?"

"Because I did know a young person that lived with Mrs. Burfield in Trafalgar Terrace. But that young person left Coltonslough full three years ago, and I've never set eyes on her since."

"But tell me all you know about her!" exclaimed Francis, almost breathless in his eagerness. "What was she like? Why do you fancy that she was the girl I am looking for?"

"Because, in the first place, she was Cornish. I'd noticed that her talk was different somehow from that of the folks about here—though she was as soft-spoken as any lady bred and born; but one day she was standing in my shop, with the children as she had care of, taking shelter from a storm—and a regular pelter it was too—and she stood looking out to sea through yonder half-glass door, which it were shut for the time being, and I made some remark about the unpleasantness of the weather, out of politeness like—for the young

woman came very often to my shop for groceries, and with lodgers' letters,—Mrs. Burfield takes lodgers, and so forth; but she looked at me in a kind of absent way, and said, 'Oh, I like it! I like it!' 'You like the storm, Miss?' I exclaimed; and then she answered all of a sudden, 'Yes, I like to see it. This place doesn't seem so strange to me to-day as it generally does. I've seen just such a storm as this from the moor on which my father's house stands; and I could almost fancy I was at home in Cornwall.'"

"And that's how you found out she was a Cornish woman? I think you've about hit it, Mr. Sanders. I think the girl who talked to you about the storm must have been my cousin, Susan Tredethlyn."

"Her name *was* Susan," answered Mr. Sanders; "I've heard Mrs. Burfield's children call her so in this very shop. She came to Coltonslough as governess to Mrs. Burfield's young family."

"A governess!" said Francis, with some slight sense of relief. "She was a governess, then, and not a servant?"

"Oh dear, no! Though, Coltonslough being a very small place, you see, sir, and most of the inhabitants being a good deal dependent upon lodgers, which gives a kind of fluctuating character to life, as you may say, sir, a governess in Coltonslough might not be looked upon exactly in the same light as elsewhere. Or, to put it plainer, sir, a governess in Coltonslough would *not* be expected to be proud."

"Oh, I understand," Mr. Tredethlyn answered, rather bitterly. "Yes, my cousin was a genteel drudge,—not so well paid, perhaps, as vulgar drudges, and rather harder worked."

"The young person was always genteel, sir, even to the extent of wearing gloves, which is not looked upon as indispensable in Coltonslough; but in the matter of going errands and opening the door, or carrying in a lodger's tea-tray, at a push, she would *not* be expected to be proud."

"And she left three years ago?"

"She did, sir."

The postmaster looked very grave as he said this,—so grave that Francis Tredethlyn could not

fail to perceive that something worse than he had yet heard remained to be told. He was not a man to diplomatise, nor yet to make any display of his emotion, but his breath came a little faster for a few moments, and then he asked, abruptly,

"How did she leave?"

Mr. Sanders hesitated a little, and then said, with some embarrassment,

"Why, Coltonslough bein' a gossiping kind of a place, sir, you're apt to hear ever so many different versions of the same thing, and it isn't for me to say which is right and which is wrong. I think, as it's a long story, sir, you'd better hear the rights of it from Mrs. Burfield."

"A long story!" repeated Francis Tredethlyn, in an undertone,—"a long story! Ah, my poor little cousin—my poor ill-used girl! And it seems only a little while ago when we played together in the churchyard at Landresdale, in the sunny hour when they let us out of school."

It did seem to him but a very little while since

he and his cousin had sat side by side under one of the big yew-trees in Landresdale churchyard, dining upon some simple repast of home-made bread and fat bacon, with a dessert of unripe apples, in the drowsy sultriness of a summer noontide. He sat for some few minutes, silently thinking of that departed time. The memory of it seemed almost like a sharp physical pain, now that he knew that some great sorrow, some bitter woman's trial, had come to his cousin. A story about her—a long story! What story should gossiping tongues have to tell of any woman, except a history of suffering and wrong?

He did not press the postmaster to tell him any thing further; but he said presently, in an altered voice—a voice that had lost something of its power and ringing vibration,

"I can get to see this Mrs. Burfield, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; I make no doubt you can. She is a very genteel person, is Mrs. Burfield, which she have known better days, and finds herself often a little drove like with her lodgers. Her

house is Number 2, sir, in the Terrace, Trafalgar Square, fronting sideways, and rather slantin' like, to the sea. You can see it, sir, from where you stand."

Following the direction of the postmaster's extended forefinger, Francis Tredethlyn did see a row of unfinished-looking houses, with the inevitable seaside bow-windows, staring out on a patch of waste ground. Why these houses, and almost all the other houses at Coltonslough should have slanted away from the sea, obliging their occupants to look out upon the expanse of waters in a sideways and sinister manner, when they might have been built directly facing that single feature of attraction, was a problem far beyond the comprehension of any visitor to the infantine watering-place.

CHAPTER XI.

A VERY OLD STORY.

Mrs. Burfield was a pale-faced and pinched-looking person, hollow-cheeked and spare of figure, who in these latter days would have inspired a stranger with the idea that she was a rigid disciplinarian of the school founded by Mr. Banting. She looked as if all saccharine and fatty elements had been carefully excluded from her food; and yet, on the other hand, she had none of the muscular energy which might be supposed to result from a carnivorous habit. She was a depressing kind of woman, with thin locks of whity-brown hair dangling upon each side of her thin face, and thin garments hanging limply upon her scanty figure, and a thin voice. There was something in Mrs. Burfield's appearance which called up vague images of drizzly days,

and pattens, and washing done at home, and a man in the passage clamorous for a water-rate, and all the most unpleasant associations of poverty.

She was a woman who prefaced every sentence she uttered with a sigh. She sighed as she admitted to Mr. Tredethlyn that her name was Burfield, as if even that fact were in some manner an affliction. She sighed as she told him, apologetically, that the house was full of lodgers, so she must ask him to step down into the little sitting-room below stairs. And yet, as she subsisted by the letting of lodgings, the crowded state of her house should have been a cause for rejoicing.

Francis had some slight difficulty in conveying his long legs down the narrow little staircase, in which there was a breakneck corner, whence awkward maid-servants were wont to precipitate themselves headlong in company with an avalanche of tea-things; but he managed to find his way down somehow or other, and was ushered into a little faded-looking underground parlour, where all the furniture seemed to have under-

gone a prolonged course of Banting, and where the evidence of children's habitation was untidily visible in every direction. The children were all at school, however, Mrs. Burfield told Francis, with another sigh; though, as she added directly afterwards that they drove her next door to raving madness when they were at home, *that* fact need scarcely have depressed her.

"I had a governess for them some time back," she said, unconsciously approaching the subject of Mr. Tredethlyn's business with her, "and the young person was very useful to me in many ways; but things have been so dull, and lodgers so uncertain, and so close as to rent and kitchen fire, and such like, that I couldn't afford to engage another young person, if I could have found any one as reasonable and as willing as her, which wasn't likely."

Here Mrs. Burfield sighed again, and to her surprise found herself echoed by her visitor.

"It is about that person, the governess, that I have come to inquire," said Francis. "I have reason to believe—I may say that I am almost

sure, she is my cousin—very near and very dear to me. Pray tell me all you can about her. I am a rich man, and I am looking for my cousin, who has a better claim than I have to the money that has lately come to me. Pray tell me every thing: you shall not find me ungrateful. I will make it well worth your while to help me in this matter."

It might be supposed that Mrs. Burfield, being ground into the very dust by the iron heel of poverty, would brighten a little on hearing this promising speech; but she did nothing of the kind; she only sighed rather more plaintively than usual, and remarked somewhat irrelevantly that her boys were beginning to grow up now, and the boots they knocked out, and the way they wore their things at the knees and elbows, were something awful.

"Tell me all you can about my cousin," urged Mr. Tredethlyn. "Ah, you don't know how long I have been away from England, and how eager I am to find that poor desolate girl. Pray tell me all you know, and quickly."

"It's a long story," said Mrs. Burfield, in the very words used by the grocer—"it's a long story, and goodness knows the rights or the wrongs of it, but if you are her cousin; and you are, I suppose—"

"I do not think there can be any doubt of it," Francis Tredethlyn answered, eagerly; "I do not think there can be any doubt that the person of whom I have heard this morning was my cousin, Susan Tredethlyn."

"The young person to whom *I* allude called herself Susan Turner."

"Yes, yes. It is only natural she should change her name. She left her home because she had been very much persecuted there. She was no doubt afraid of being taken back, and was anxious to hide herself under a false name."

"If I had known that she had come to me under a false name, never would she have slept a night in this house," exclaimed Mrs. Burfield, with something between a sigh and a shudder.

"She was a good and honest girl, under whatever name she came to you," answered

Francis Tredethlyn; "but pray tell me the story."

But Mrs. Burfield could not immediately comply with this request; she had to go into the kitchen first, to see that "the girl" was basting some mutton that was being roasted for a very fastidious "front parlour," who had a rooted objection to baked meats; and then she had to go out into a little area, in which the window looked out, and to hold parley with some person above, who dropped her down divers loaves, and disputed with her as to a certain "twopenny German," which had been had, or had not been had, on the previous Tuesday. At last, however, she was able to seat herself opposite poor Francis, and to begin her story, from the narration of which she seemed to derive a dismal kind of enjoyment.

"It's close upon seven years since my poor dear husband died," Mrs. Burfield began, and for some little time Francis Tredethlyn was afraid that she was going to favour him with a sketch of her own personal history, rather than that story which he was so eager to know. "It's close upon

seven years, seven years of toil and trouble for me, and up to that time I'd never known what it was to want for any thing in a moderate way. He was managing clerk in an insurance office, sir, and was as fine a looking man as you need wish to see; but he was taken—sudden—and I was left alone to provide for four young children. Well, sir, I tried one thing and another, but being genteelly brought up, things seemed to go harder with me than they go with some people; and at last an uncle, on my mother's side, who is very wealthy, and lately retired from the patent chimney-pot business, gave me enough to buy a little furniture, and start fresh down here. It's been a hard life, sir, but I shouldn't have so much minded that if it hadn't been for the children; I couldn't bear to see them running wild upon the shore, or playing with vulgar, dirty children on the waste ground; so, a little better than four years ago, I thought I'd try if I couldn't get a person to take care of them, who'd be a kind of governess to them, and would give me a helping hand with the house when my lodgings were full, and wouldn't want above a few

pounds a year, just to get herself a new gown once in a way, and so on. Well, sir, I inquired for such a person, but lor'! you might just as well inquire for any thing you wanted on Robinson Crusoe's island as at Coltonslough, unless it's queen's taxes and poor-rates, and you can have plenty of them without asking. So at last some one says to me—I think it was Mr. Sanders at the post-office,—'Why don't you advertise in the *Times*, Mrs. Burfield? it'll cost you a trifle, but you're sure to get what you want.' So the long and the short of it was, I did advertise for a genteel person who would undertake to teach young children, and make herself generally useful, in consideration of a comfortable home and a honorarium of ten pounds per annum. Mr. Sanders advised me to put it in the light of a honorarium, as he said it looked more that way. A young person from the country preferred, I stated in the advertisement, for *the things* that lodgers from London bring down with their luggage, and then turn round upon you and object to the bedding, had quite set me against Londoners.

Well, sir, I got a good many answers, but the best-written letter was signed Susan Turner. So I wrote to Miss Turner—the address was at a little coffee-house near the Great Western terminus—and I told her that if she liked to come down to Coltonslough for an interview, I would be her expenses one way. Well, she came, and I found her a very pleasant-spoken, respectable-looking young person, and I took to her at first sight to that degree, that I allowed her to come to me without references, she being at variance, as she told me, with her relations in the country."

"She came to you at once, then?"

"Yes, she stayed with me there and then, not caring to go back to London, the strangeness of which frightened her, she said; and she had no luggage except a little bit of a carpet-bag, full of things, which she sent for next day; and then by and bye the truth came out, that she'd run away from home. But she had a couple of sovereigns, and she went out and bought herself a few more things, and made herself as neat and comfortable as she could. She didn't make much secret of

how she'd left her home, poor girl. Her father had wanted her to marry against her own wishes, she said, and in her fear of him she had run away."

"Poor girl! poor girl!"

"Well, sir," sighed Mrs. Burfield, "we got on very comfortable for some months. I never met a young person more kind or more willing. The children took to her as if she'd been their own sister, and she was altogether the steadiest, most industrious young person. Things had gone pretty comfortable with me that season; and in the autumn, quite late, going on for November, when people don't expect to see a single lodger in all Coltonslough, what should I hear, one afternoon, but the wheels of a fly, and a tremendous double knock at my door; and who should I see when I opened it, but a tall, handsome-looking gentleman, who walked straight into my parlour, and took the rooms, off-hand, and without so much as inquiring what the terms would be, which, considering the haggling and beating-down I'd been accustomed to in the very best part of the season, seemed almost like a dream."

Mrs. Burfield had warmed with her subject, and had refrained for some time from the relief of a sigh; but she paused now to indulge herself in a very heavy one, and then, after a general disquisition upon the sorrows of a lodging-house keeper, went on:

"He really was one of the handsomest, easiest-spoken gentlemen I ever met with, and he seemed to take away one's breath almost; he had such a dashing kind of way with him that, if you'd have shut your eyes, you'd almost have fancied him on horseback, galloping away for dear life. He seemed all upon the prance, as it were, if I may use the observation. 'Now I daresay you'll want references,' he said; 'and if so, I can't give you any without putting myself to more trouble than I care about. But you can have some rent in advance, if that'll do; and I've no end of luggage, if that'll do.' And then he flung himself into one of the arm-chairs, and burst out laughing when it creaked and groaned, as it were, under him; for lodgers have no more feeling for an unprotected female's furniture than if they was so many Ojib-

beway Indians—and I can't deny that the parlour chairs were uncertain. But I didn't mind the strange gentleman making game of them, somehow, for he had such a pleasant way with him, and showed his white teeth, and looked so handsome, that he seemed quite to brighten up the place.

"'Well,' he said, presently, 'can you guess why I came to Coltonslough in the month of November?' And of course I told him no, I couldn't, not having the pleasure of being acquainted with him. Upon which he burst out laughing again. 'I came here,' he said, 'because I was told Coltonslough was about the dullest place upon the surface of the earth, and I mean to stay here till after Christmas. So you may tell the man outside to bring in my luggage, and look sharp about it.' Upon which the flyman brought in a couple of big portmanteaus, and a gun-case, and a hat-box, and two of the heaviest trunks that ever came into my passage. 'Books, ma'am, books, every one of them, and all as heavy as lead,' said the young gentleman, as the corners of the boxes went scratching and bumping upon the paper,—

and the way lodgers' boxes do scratch and bump an unprotected female's paper is something awful. But for all that I wasn't sorry to see plenty of luggage, though the books might have been brick-bats neatly packed in hay, as has been known to happen in this very terrace. 'Well, ma'am,' says the gentleman, when his luggage had all been brought in and the flyman paid, 'now I can settle down comfortably. Do I look as if I'd been plucked, do you think, ma'am?' he asked, looking at me very hard, and sticking his hands deep down in his pockets, which was one of those ways of his that I venture to call prancing. I didn't quite catch his meaning, but I thought he alluded to something unpleasant; so I said, 'No, indeed, I should think not.' 'But I have, ma'am,' he answered, looking at me in a measuring sort of a way, as if I'd been a five-barred gate, and he was just going to fly clean over me; and that measuring look of his was another of his galloping ways. 'But I *have* been plucked, ma'am,' he said, 'as clean as any fowl that they ever send you home from the poulterer's. I'm a featherless

biped, ma'am. So I've come down to Coltonslough, being, as I understand, the dullest hole upon the earth's crust, and I mean to go in a perisher.' A 'perisher' was his expression. 'And I mean to read like old boots; so you may let your servant light me a fire, ma'am, and get me some chops; for I suppose I must resign myself to an existence sustained upon chops so long as I'm at Coltonslough.'"

Once more Mrs. Burfield stopped to take breath. Francis Tredethlyn listened in silence, with a moody frown upon his face. Already he hated this man, of whose share in his cousin's history he was yet ignorant. He felt as we feel sometimes at a play, when we see the villain first appear upon the stage, and know he is a villain, yet do not know what his special crime is to be.

"Well, sir, of all the pleasant lodgers that ever darkened a widow's door, the plucked young gentleman was the pleasantest. He got up early, and went to his books and papers as soon as he was dressed, and had chops and strong green-tea for breakfast; and he sat at his books all day, till it

was too dark for him to sit any longer, and then he went and strolled up and down the Esplanade, smoking for an hour or so; and then he came in and had more chops and cold brandy-and-water for his dinner, except when I took the liberty of roasting him a fowl, or getting some other little nicety, just by way of variety; and then, after dinner, he went to his books and papers again, and sat up till very late, reading and writing and drinking strong green-tea."

"But my cousin Susan," cried Francis. He was getting impatient under this minute description of the lodger's habits. "What has all this to do with my cousin?"

"I'm coming to that," Mrs. Burfield answered, with a sigh that was more profound than usual. "You see, sir, it happened at this time, being the end of the season, and Coltonslough as empty as it could be, it happened that we were without a servant; so myself and Susan Turner took it in turns to wait upon the young gentleman. Not that I ever asked her to do any thing that you can call menial; but she'd take him up his tea, and clear

away his dinner-things, and light his candles for him, and such like; and knowing her to be a respectable young woman, I didn't keep that sharp watch over her that some folks might have done. If she stopped ten minutes or so in his room, talking to him, I usen't to think any thing about it—you can hear almost every sound in these houses, and it was quite pleasant to hear her soft voice and his laugh ringing out every now and then. He wasn't the sort of gentleman you could suspect of any harm, he had such a happy kind of way with him, as if he was good friends with himself and all the world. He lent Susan books—books of poetry, with all sorts of pencil-writing upon the edges of them; and I used sometimes to fancy Susan cared more for the pencil-writing than she did for the poetry itself; she'd sit and pore over it so when the children were gone to bed and we were alone in this room. Sometimes the plucked young gentleman would come down here of an evening to fetch himself another candle, or to tell us that he'd let his fire out, or something of that kind, for he wasn't a bit proud; and then, instead

of going back directly, he'd sit down, and make himself as much at home as if he had lived among us all his life; and, oh dear me, sir, how he would talk!—all about books and poetry, and the foreign places he'd seen, and plays, and music, and writers, and actors, and singers. He seemed to know every thing in the world. So you see, one way and another, he saw a good deal of Susan; for I found out afterwards from the children that when he went out in the dusk to smoke his cigar he generally contrived to meet Susan, and then he'd walk with her and the children till it was time for them to go indoors. She was a good girl, and she wasn't the girl to throw herself in his way. If they were much together, it was because he followed her. I might have known the meaning of his sitting in this room for hours together of a night; but he had such a natural way of doing every thing that it threw one off one's guard, somehow."

"The scoundrel!" muttered Francis Tredethlyn, between his clenched teeth. "But you haven't told me his name. I want to know his name."

"He'd been with us more than a fortnight

before ever I asked him what his name was, and then somehow or other the question came up, and he said his name was Lesley—Robert Lesley; but somehow, looking back upon it afterwards, it seemed to me as if he hesitated a little before he said the name. Well, things went on as comfortable as possible for more than two months, and then he went away, taking all his luggage with him, and paying me very liberal for every thing he'd had, besides half-a-crown apiece to the children, which at that time of year came very welcome, and of course I took it from them immediately to go towards their new boots. He went away; and as I thought, somehow, he'd had a kind of a liking for Susan, and Susan for him, I half expected the poor girl would fret a little when he was gone; but she didn't, and looking at her sometimes as she sat at work opposite to me, I used to fancy there was a kind of happy smile like upon her face. She'd been with me six months by this time, and I paid her the little trifle that was due, and what did she do next day but go out and spend over so much in

toys and such-like for the children, which, as I told her, was very wrong, considering how badly off she was for clothes. But she made no answer, except to look at me with the same smile I'd seen so often on her face since Mr. Lesley had gone."

"Poor girl—poor, helpless, innocent girl!"

The dark frown melted into a softer expression as Francis Tredethlyn muttered these few broken words. He was no longer thinking of the stranger—the nameless villain of this common story. He was thinking of his cousin Susy's innocent face, with the smile of girlish trustfulness upon it.

"One day, when Mr. Lesley had been gone a little better than three weeks, a letter came for Susan—I'd need to notice it, for it was the first she'd had since she'd been with me. She ran upstairs directly she heard the postman's knock, and took the letter from him with her own hands, and stopped to read it in the passage. She was putting it in her pocket as she came back into this room, and her cheeks were flushed as bright as two red roses, but she didn't say a word about the letter. All that afternoon she seemed in a

kind of flutter, and every now and then she would come all over in a tremble, and drop her work in her lap. She was making some pinafores for the boys, and I said to her, 'Susan, what ever is the matter?' but she turned it off somehow, and nothing more was said until after tea, when the children were safe out of the way, and we were sitting alone together. Then I never did see any body so restless as she was, laying her work down and taking it up again, and fetching a book—one of the books he'd left with her,—and opening and shutting it, and then pretending to read, but all in the same restless way; till at last she came suddenly behind my chair, and flung her arms round my neck, and began to sob fit to break her poor loving heart. And it was ever so long before she could get calm enough to say any thing; but at last she cried out, 'Oh, Mrs. Burfield, I'm afraid I'm very ungrateful; you've been so good to me, and we've been so happy together.' And so we had; though I do think, poor tender-hearted dear, she'd gone through as much on account of the taxes as if she'd been the householder instead

of me. 'I'm going to leave you, Mrs. Burfield,' she said; 'I'm going to leave you, and the children that love me so dearly. I'm going away to be married to Mr. Lesley. I'm to go by the first train to-morrow morning, and he's to meet me at the station, and at eleven o'clock we're to be married.'

"You may guess how she took my breath away when she told me this. But I said, 'Oh, my dear, you can't mean to do any thing so mad as go alone to meet Mr. Lesley, which is little better than a stranger to you?' 'A stranger!' she cried out, 'my darling Robert a stranger! Oh, if you only knew how noble he is, and how much he is going to give up to marry a poor girl like me!' And then she went on about him as if he'd been something better than a human creature; and having always found him so much the gentleman myself, and so open-hearted and frank in all his ways, I could scarcely do otherwise than believe her. But still I urged her all I could against trusting him. 'Don't go, my dear,' I said; 'or, if you must go, let me go with you.' But she

blushed very red, and said, 'Oh, Mrs. Burfield, the marriage is to be a secret, and I promised Robert again and again that I wouldn't say a word about it to you or any living creature. Only you've been so good to me, and I couldn't bear to go away without telling you the whole truth.' And upon this I begged her still harder not to go away; I told her no good ever came out of secret marriages, and that there was generally something underhand and false at the bottom of them, that brought about all kinds of trouble and suffering afterwards. And I told her how my Burfield married me publicly in St. Pancras' Church, and would have his two sisters—one in pink and one in blue—besides the Miss Parkinses, his first cousins, who were sweetly dressed in green and salmon, to walk after me to the altar. But it was no more use talking to Susan than if she'd been a stone statue, though she sat herself on the little hassock at my feet, and kept crying one minute and smiling the next, and talking about her darling Robert, and kissing me, till I almost thought her brain was turned. It was no use

talking. 'I love him so dearly,' she said, 'and I know how noble and generous he is.' And that was her only argument; and long before daylight the next morning she went away by the early train; and though my heart seemed bleeding for her, I couldn't kiss her when she said good-by, and I couldn't go to the station to see her off. 'No, Susan,' I said, 'if you must go, you must, and I've no power to keep you back, but I'll be neither act nor part in your going.' But I stood at my window to see her go away, and I shall never forget the dark, drizzly morning, with streaks of gray like on one side of the sky, and white sickly-looking stars on the other, and Susan walking across the waste ground all alone, with the rain driving at her, and the wind beating at her, and a bit of a shabby carpet-bag in her hand. It seemed so dreadful to think she was going to be married like that."

"But she *did* go away?" cried Francis. "She must have come back to you, then; for the letter with the Coltonslough post-mark reached her father less than eighteen months ago."

"I'm coming to that," answered Mrs. Burfield. "It's about eighteen months ago that she came back to me, looking, oh! so changed, so broken-down, that I hadn't the heart to ask her any questions. I could see that all had gone wrong, and I could guess pretty well what kind of wrong it was. She never mentioned Mr. Lesley's name; and there was something in her face that seemed to make me afraid to mention it myself. She wanted to lodge with me, she said, and would pay me for her lodgings. I could see that she wore a wedding-ring on her finger, but she had no other jewelry whatever. She was dressed in black,—black silk that had once been very handsome, but which was rusty and shabby then. The first night she came to me she sat up very late writing, and in the morning she went out with a letter in her hand. She was with me more than two months; but that was the last time I ever saw her write. She used to be fond of reading; but now she never took up a book, though Mr. Lesley had left a good many of his books in the little chiffonier in the parlour, think-

ing to come back, as he told me. She used to be fond of the children; but now she never noticed them, and after a little while they seemed to shrink away from her, as if she was strange to them somehow. For hours and days together she used to sit in the bow-window, watching the road from the station, as if she expected some one. At dusk she would go out and walk upon the esplanade, just at the time that he used to walk with his cigar. It was the dull season, and there was no one to notice her. At last, about the middle of May, when the visitors began to come to Coltonslough, she told me one day that she must leave me. I said, 'Was it on account of the lodgings?' because she knew I used to raise the rent at that time of year, and I thought that might be the cause of her wanting to go. But she said, 'Oh! no, no.' She had only had one purpose in stopping so long, and that was in the hope of seeing some one, or getting an answer to a letter she had written, and now there was no longer any hope of that. So I couldn't persuade her to stay any longer, do what I would, and she went away. She had

friends in London, she told me, who had promised to put her in the way of getting her own living somehow or other. I kissed her this time, willing enough, poor child, and I went with her to the station; and I thought her pale face looked almost like a ghost's as she waved her hand to me from the carriage-window."

"You're a good woman!" cried Mr. Tredethlyn, half crushing Mrs. Burfield's skinny hands in his strong fingers,—"you're a good woman, and you did your best to befriend that poor girl."

Mrs. Burfield sighed, and wiped her eyes with the corner of a rusty black-silk apron. The world had been very hard for her; but there was a gentle, womanly haven somewhere in her breast, and Susan Tredethlyn had taken shelter there.

"She'd been gone a little over six weeks, when an old gentleman came one morning, and asked to see a girl called Susan. That's how he put it. He was very stern-looking, and he threw me all in a tremble, somehow, with his ways; but I asked him down here, and then, little by

little, he made me tell him pretty nearly all I've told you. I couldn't keep any thing back from him; he put his questions so fierce and sudden; and every time I hesitated ever so little, he accused me of prevaricating with him, and trying to deceive him. I could see his eyes glaring at me like coals of fire, and his face turned of a bluish white, so that I was almost frightened he'd drop down in a fit. But when he'd got all the story out of me, he stood up as straight and stern as if he'd been only twenty years old, and said, 'No man of my name ever knew what disgrace was until to-day; and may the heaviest curse that ever fell upon a woman's head come down upon my shameful daughter!' He stretched up his two hands,—and I shall never forget him as he stood there with his white hair, and the bluish white of his face, and the dreadful glare in his eyes. Then he put on his hat and walked out of the house, taking no more notice of me than if I'd been a stock or a stone. I heard the front door bang-to after him; and I ran up-stairs to the parlour-window, and saw him walking away to-

wards the station; and that's the last I saw of him."

"Can you remember upon what day this occurred?"

"Yes, I can; for I'd had the parlour-lodgers leave me the day before. It was the 29th of June."

The 29th of June! and on the 30th, Oliver Tredethlyn had executed that will which made Francis master of thirty thousand a year. The young man knew now why his uncle had left him a great fortune, and found it still more difficult to feel very grateful to his benefactor.

There was a long pause, during which vengeful thoughts had their full way in the breast of Francis Tredethlyn.

"Can you tell me nothing more of this man," he said presently,—"this scoundrel, who called himself Robert Lesley?"

Mrs. Burfield only answered by a hopeless shake of her head.

"He left some books, you say. Was there none among them that would give any clue to who or what he was?"

Again Mrs. Burfield shook her head.

"You're welcome to look at the books," she said; "there's plenty of pencil-writing in them, but no name or address,—only initials."

She knelt down before a little chiffonier in a corner by the fireplace, and took out a few volumes, some handsomely, some shabbily bound, and placed them before Francis Tredethlyn.

Upon the handsomely-bound books the initials "R. L." appeared in a gilded monogram. Four of the volumes were German translations of some recondite classics; but there was a fifth upon which Mr. Tredethlyn fastened eagerly. It was a small flat volume, bound in sheepskin, and fastened with a brass lock—a very superior kind of lock. On the cover was written the one word "Journal."

"Let me have this book," he said; "I'll give you a hundred pounds for it."

Mrs. Burfield's mouth opened with a spasmodic action, and for once in her life she forgot to sigh.

"A hundred pounds!"

"A hundred—two, if you like. Haven't I told you that I'm a rich man? and you've been kind to my cousin. I'll give you the money as a free gift, for the matter of that; but I must have this book. It's a journal—a book in which a man writes a history of his own life. An officer I knew in Van Diemen's Land used to write such a history by fits and starts. How do I know what this may tell me about my cousin? Let me have it. I know the book isn't yours; but there can be no such thing as honour or faith to be kept with a man like that. Let me have the book."

There was a good deal more said upon the matter; but the end of it was that Francis Tredethlyn went back to London with the sheepskin-covered volume in his pocket; and Mrs. Burfield, retiring to rest after a heavy supper of cold meat and cucumber, dreamt that she had inherited a million of money from one of the Coltonslough tax-collectors.

CHAPTER XII.

A MODERN GENTLEMAN'S DIARY.

FRANCIS TREDETHLYN went back to the hotel in Covent Garden with the little sheepskin-covered volume appertaining to the gentleman who called himself Robert Lesley safely stowed in his pocket. He went straight back to the hotel, ate his simple dinner, drew the candles near him, and then, taking up a poker from the hearth, made short work of the lock under which the stranger had kept his secrets. All thought of those sunny gardens and drawing-rooms at Twickenham, the glancing river, the woody background, faded out of his mind for a time, and gave place to one settled purpose—the discovery of his missing cousin's destroyer.

Yes, her destroyer! He had only been able to read Mrs. Burfield's story in one fashion. The solitary departure in the chill light of a winter's

morning, the haste and secrecy, the lonely return long afterwards; these things seemed to the young man to point only to one conclusion;—the simple Cornish girl's faith had been betrayed by the man she had so implicitly trusted.

In the little volume before him Francis Tredethlyn hoped to find some further clue to that sad history. He seemed to take a savage pleasure in punishing the neat brazen lock, which he shattered with a couple of vigorous blows from the handle of the poker.

"I wonder whether, when a man's a villain, he writes *that* down?" thought Mr. Tredethlyn. "I can't fancy a scoundrel putting the truth about himself even on paper; and if the truth isn't here, I can't see how the book will help me. And yet there must be secrets in it too, or he'd never have had such a lock as this. Mr. Lowther used to throw his journal about any where, and I don't think *he* ever did any thing that was particularly worth writing down."

The Cornishman began to turn over the volume very slowly, looking at the pages cautiously, almost

as if he expected to see some venomous creature crawl out from between the leaves. The first twenty pages of the book were filled with the records of a college life, in which brief memoranda of study were interspersed with boating slang and turf calculations. The name of a certain Rosa, of the King's Head, appeared very often in these earlier pages; and there were little epigrams about Rosa, bespeaking the easy-going morality of a Rochester or a Sedley, rather than the pure sentiments of a Tennyson or a Longfellow. Altogether there was a reckless, swaggering manner about the book, which very well corresponded with Mrs. Burfield's description of the prancing stranger.

But the volume had no interest for Francis Tredethlyn until he came to the twentieth page, where the name of Coltonslough figured for the first time.

"*November* 8.—The abomination of desolation, and just the place for a fellow that wants to read hard and be delivered from the society of his fellow-creatures! Arrived yesterday afternoon:

found civil landlady, stereotyped sea-side accommodation; decrepit easy-chair, slippery horsehair cushions; no window-curtains to speak of, and a great deal of unnecessary drapery festooned about a rickety tent-bedstead; wash-handstand one size too large for a doll, and fifty sizes too small for any civilised being; shells and shepherdesses on the mantelpieces, and any amount of blown-glass decanters on the sideboard. Dined on chops, which were fried, soddened in their own grease. Must speak to the landlady to-morrow, and insist on gridiron. The woman who would fry chops would think nothing of human sacrifices. A girl waited upon me, a good deal younger than Rosa, and I think prettier—but we have changed all that, so I didn't take particular notice of her. Read hard till after one, and write this before retiring to my couch,—flock, and lumpy, for I dug my knuckles into the counterpane while examining the apartment.

"*November* 9.—The girl, who is infinitely superior to Rosa, brought me my breakfast. More chops, not fried, but soddened in relic of the dark

ages entitled Dutch oven, for I inquired; and underdone French rolls. Why, O provincial baker, always underdone? What grudge dost thou bear against thy fellow-man that thou seekest insidiously to undermine his constitution with thy clammy bread-stuffs? Girl, infinitely prettier than Rosa, cleared away breakfast. Very shy, and only answers polite inquiries in monosyllables. Asked if she was relation of woman of house. No, no relation, nursery governess to children. Comes from some remote district in the west of England; evidently objects to be precise as to locality. Heard her go down kitchen stairs with tea-things, and did *not* hear her reascend them. Conclude that the nursery is somewhere in the cellarage. Read hard all day. Smoke and stroll in the evening. Landlady waited on me at dinner. Dismal change, after monosyllabic girl, recalling Death's-head at Egyptian banquets, but *not* crowned with flowers. More reading after dinner, brandy-and-water cold, and now to bed. Have ordered mattress to be put over flock. Sleeping on knobby surface all very well now

and then, but not for a permanence. Mem: To keep my eye upon Lord Paisley's 'Blazing Tom,' for the Craven meeting.

"*November* 12.—No diary yesterday or the day before. Read with German crib: wonderful fellows those Germans for first-class translations of classic fogies. Wrote to H. C. to put a pony on 'Blazing Tom.' Walked on the esplanade in the afternoon, and made the acquaintance of monosyllabic Cornish girl, infinitely prettier than Rosa. Yes, I succeeded in breaking the ice, with considerable trouble, for I never *did* see any thing feminine so shy and frightened as this brown-eyed Cornish girl. 'Her eye's dark charm,' &c. Well, there *is* something of the gazelle in her eyes, something shrinking and fawn-like. I could fancy the white doe of what's-its-name looking as she looked at me yesterday.

"I went out for my smoke and stroll rather earlier than I had intended. I saw the Cornish girl and three uncouth children in rusty leather boots wending their way across the piece of waste ground which forms the delicious prospect before

my window. A nice, cool, gray afternoon, with a low yellow streak on the western horizon; a gray sea, melting into a gray sky, with only just that one golden streak glimmering along the edge of the waters; the sort of afternoon that reminds one of Tennyson's poetry. So I lighted my cigar and went out for a stroll. Perhaps I followed the monosyllabic girl. What do I know? as that amiable French nuisance, who is perpetually quoted in newspaper leaders, remarked. Enough that I went, found the Cornish girl, very shabbily dressed, but unutterably pretty, strolling listlessly up and down the paved walk beside the sea. They *call* it the sea; but, O for the roaring breakers of the Atlantic, or the long hoarse roar of the waves as the German Ocean surges on broad yellow sands yonder, far away in the North!

"And so, having lighted my cigar, I strolled up and down the esplanade. Of course I began to talk to the children. If children have any use in this world—which I have been frequently inclined to doubt—surely it must be in this matter of serving as a means of introduction to pretty nurse-

maids. The children and I were intimate in no time; the presuming little imps became, of course, obnoxiously familiar; and, like all go-betweens, were very difficult to shake off when done with. But I got the Cornish girl to talk at last. She is not stupid, only shy; and she told me a good deal, in a pretty, simple, girlish way, about her native county, always keeping clear of all precise allusion to locality, by the bye. She is very pretty,—I had almost written lovely, but that adjective can only be applied to a high-bred beauty. She is extremely pretty, and that white doe of Rhylston (isn't it?) look in her eyes haunted me all last night while I was reading. Yes, it was very pleasant, that stroll upon the esplanade. I threw away my first cigar, and forgot to light another, though she would have allowed me to smoke, I daresay. It was very pleasant, that cool gray sea, and the yellow streak fading in the west, and the flat gray shore, and the generally Tennysonian aspect of every thing. It was very much better than the King's Arms, and a lot of fellows drinking no end of Bass, and chaffing Rosa. I don't suppose this Cornish girl

knows what chaff means. I almost shudder when I think of Rosa, with her big, round, black eyes, and the sticky little curls upon her forehead, and the tartan neck-ribbons, and great yellow earrings. And Oxonians have married Rosas before my time, and have deservedly gone to the dogs thereupon. But fifty thousand is your figure, my dear Robert, —fifty thousand, well sounded, and no separate-use-and-maintenance humbug either. Something in the commercial-widow line, I suppose you will have to put up with, my poor Bob; but no greedy old parent to interfere with the disposal of the money. The widow, or the orphan, if a fifty-thousand pounder, is the sort of article for you, dear child.

"*November* 13.—She brought me my breakfast this morning—(what, is she *she* already? Alas, poor Rosa!)—and I got her to pour out my tea. I couldn't detain her long: she was so *very* busy, she said, and seemed painfully anxious to get away. I made her talk a little. She has a nice low voice,—'an excellent thing,' &c.! Now Rosa had a vixenish way of speaking, that always jarred

upon me, even when I was deepest down that pit into which the fair barmaid's admirers cast themselves. She—the Cornish girl—is what people call a genteel young person, with white hands and a slim waist, and a nice way of doing her hair and putting on her collars and cuffs. Her name is Susan Turner, by the bye; and the children call her Susy. Could any thing sound more pastoral? Susy. The name of Rosa was always so painfully suggestive of nigger melodies. Another cool gray afternoon, and another low yellow line across the sky; so I went out for my smoke at the same time as yesterday. She was on the esplanade with the children. She instructs them in arithmetic, writing, and elementary smatterings of history, geography, and grammar, after dinner, and then brings them out for a walk till tea-time, after which they 'retire to rest,' as the novelists have it, not without considerable rebellious scuffling in the passage and on the stairs. That is the order of the day. In the morning, I suspect, she is housemaid, parlour-maid, needlewoman, or any thing else that my landlady's necessities oblige

her to be. But she is always equally neat and pretty; and if she were only provided with that trifling little matter of fifty thousand or so in the elegant simplicity of the three per cents, I should be decidedly inclined to fall in love with her. Does one ever fall in love with the fifty-thousand pounder, by the bye? I rather think not. She, Susy, was not quite so shy this afternoon, and we talked a good deal. I offered to lend her some books. I offered to lend Rosa books once, when I was in the lowest depths of spooneyism, and was unhappy about her grammar—those dreadful superfluous 'whiches,' and intolerable 'as hows'!—but Rosa rejected my literature, as dry rubbish that gave her the horrors. I had lent her the 'Bride of Lammermoor.' My little Susy won't turn up that innocent nose of hers at any sentimental story, I'll be bound. I've found an odd volume of Byron, containing 'Parisina' and the 'Prisoner of Chillon,' and a lot of the 'To Thirza' business.

"N.B.—I find that I've called her my little Susy! Pretty well, as I've been only a week in

the place. Am I going down into another pit, I wonder—a deeper abyss than that into which Rosa casts her victims? Poor, pretty, fawn-eyed little darling! Take care of yourself, my dear Robert. Poor, friendless Susy! She couldn't well be *worse off* under any circumstances than she is in this place, that's one blessing: the drudge of a mistress who is herself a slave in the bondage of poverty. I went down to the kitchen yesterday to get a fresh supply of coals—these people are ready to fall down and worship me because I'm not proud, as they put it, but there are numerous orders of pride, I think,—and I saw their dinner. Such a poor bone of mutton! Poor little Susy! how she would open her eyes at sight of the Richmond and Greenwich banquets that I have seen given to persons as inferior to herself as—Hyperion to the other person. What a frightful hindrance to original composition is that abominable habit of hackneyed quotation!—the great newspaper-mill going round three-hundred-and-thirteen times a-year, and only one little limited stock of quotations for all the leader-writers.

"*November* 16.—Sunday, and a wet day; saw Susan start for church in the morning with prayer-books and children. Strolled out with umbrella a little after twelve; found church; unpleasant new building, smelling of damp stucco, and looking like an edifice of soddened brown paper; waited in the porch, patient as that young idiot in Arthur Pendennis's poem, until my lady came out, and conducted her home in triumph under my umbrella, while the awkward squad of children brought up the rear under cover of the maternal gingham. She was obliged to take my arm; and as the walk from the church is rather a long one, we got alarmingly intimate—when I say alarmingly intimate, I mean that she has taken to blushing when I speak to her. That's the worst of these fawn-like girls, they will blush! And when they're pretty, the blushes are so bewitching. And when they don't happen to have fifty thousand or so, what is a fellow to do? Take to his heels, replies the stern moralist, who has sown his own wild oats twenty years ago, and is envious of the young scatterers of to-day. I came to Coltons-

lough to read; and come what may, I shall stay there till it's time to go back to St. B. In the mean time, Susan is a brown-eyed angel—an angel who leads the life of a low-bred drudge, and for whom any possible change of circumstances *must* be a change for the better.

"Of course I questioned her about the sermon as we walked home. Take an interest in sermons, and women will believe in you, though you were the veriest scoundrel that ever admired Voltaire and considered the 'Pucelle' his *chef-d'œuvre*. What a little Puritan she is! She has been to church twice every Sunday ever since she can remember, she told me, and to Sunday-school, and to all kinds of examinations and cross-examinations in the vicar's parlour. I don't suppose *she* would have floundered as I did, and come to grief over some of the questions those old fogies at Oxford asked me about Biblical history. She knows all about Saul, and David, and Jonathan, and those everlasting wars with the Philistines, I daresay. She is very pretty, lovely—yes, lovely, though *not* high-bred. I sometimes fancy, though,

that she must have decent blood in her veins. I never saw a prettier little hand upon my arm than that which rested there to-day, as I brought her home from church. If I were—something utterly different from what I am, I would get my degree, go in for a country curacy, and little Susy should be my wife. But *noblesse oblige:* which very elastic aphorism means, in my case, that I must marry a rich woman, and hold my own in my native county whenever the reigning potentate is polite enough to retire to the dusky shades whither all earthly sovereigns must go.

"Poor little Susan! pretty little Susan! When I am a county magnate, laying down the law at the head of my table in the great dining-room at the hall, shall I look back and think of these days, and smile at myself, remembering that I could be so foolish as to go out on a wet Sunday to escort a little nursemaid along a damp clay road?

"Read hard all the afternoon! dined on an elderly fowl flavoured with Dutch oven—a bird that must have known Coltonslough when the first bow-windowed house was a damp brickwork skele-

ton, grim and open to the howling of the winds. Read for some time after dinner, and let my fire out. Went down-stairs to hunt up matches and firewood, and found my landlady and Susan sitting opposite to each other at a little table with one tallow-candle, reading pious compositions of an evangelical tendency. They both seemed glad to see me; so I stopped and talked to them. Susan had read the 'Prisoner of Chillon;' she read it last night, and cried over it 'fearful,' my landlady informed me; so we were able to talk about the poem, and I read two or three of the fugitive pieces aloud. I used to be rather great at the debating-club at O., and I gave them the 'Thyrzas' and 'Day of my Destinys' very strong. I could see the tears shining in Susan's eyes before I'd finished. I used to recite poetry to Rosa sometimes, when I'd been taking too much Bass, and we stood in the moonlit porch at the King's Arms, with the river, and the willows, and the towing-path all of a shimmer in the silvery light; but one is apt to get tired of reciting sentimental poetry to a young person who cries 'Lor', how funny!' at the close

of some passionate verse. I remember thundering out that grand anathema of Tom Moore's against the Prince Regent, 'Go, deceiver, go!' and my Rosa asked me naïvely what the gentleman had done that the other gentleman should use such bad language to him. No, Rosa, your strong point was not intellect. In the matter of sticky curls and large black eyes you are unsurpassed, but the sentimental element in your nature may be represented by zero.

"*November* 30.—More blanks in my journal. I said we were growing alarmingly intimate; such an intimacy *is* alarming to a fellow who came to Coltonslough bent on devoting himself to Aristotle and Aristophanes, Æschylus and Euripides, and all that sort of people. Have been reading 'The Clouds' all this morning, but found a strange undercurrent of Susan Turner pervading that classic satire; and I mean to go in and win this time; those fellows at St. Boniface sha'n't be able to laugh at my discomfiture a second time. Why were women created for the trouble and confusion of the superior sex? I thought I should be so

safe at Coltonslough, remote from Rosa, the Delilah of my youth; and lo! here is another Delilah, a thousand times more dangerous—a shy, brown-eyed Omphale, for whose sake any intellectual Hercules on this earth would meekly hold the distaff. She is *so* pretty; and all those modest, shrinking ways have such an unspeakable fascination after a long course of Rosa's sharp repartees, all redolent of the bar and the beer-engines. I can never dissociate Rosa from the smell of malt liquors and ardent spirits, with just a faint suspicion of lemons and stale pork-pie. But there must be something extraordinary about *this* girl, for her vulgar surroundings do not seem to vulgarise her. I don't mean that she is one of nature's duchesses, or any humbug of that sort. I have no belief in nature's nobility, and to my mind a duchess is a person who has been cradled in Belgravia, whose long-clothes were flounced with *point d'Alençon*, and to whom the wrong side of Temple Bar would be as strange as the centre of Africa. I should by no means care to see my little Susy in a London drawing-room; but I can

fancy her domiciled in some rustic cottage in the lake-district, a patient Wordsworthian little hand-maiden, waiting upon and worshipping her husband, and getting him cosy breakfasts, with silvery trout broiled to perfection, and mushrooms newly gathered from the neighbouring plains. If I were only an embryo curate, with neither expectations nor ambitious desires, I scarcely think that I could find a better wife than this simple gazelle-eyed maiden; but——Oh that terrible monosyllable! The history of all the world seems made up of buts and ifs.

"My afternoon stroll upon the esplanade has grown into an established thing. Sixpence judiciously bestowed upon the children despatches those young abominations scurrying over the waste ground to an emporium which they call 'the shop,' whence they return after an interval, embrowned and sticky with the traces of gingerbread and barley-sugar. In the mean while Susan and I are alone on that dreary esplanade. What is it Byron says about youth, and solitude, and the sea? Well, that sort of thing *is* rather a

dangerous combination; and I begin to think that if I want to redeem my character at St. B., I shall be obliged to take myself and my books away from Coltonslough. 'Breathes there the wretch with soul so dead,' who could sit in that dingy parlour, coaching himself in the classics, while one of the prettiest girls in all the British dominions is walking up and down the esplanade opposite his window, and thinking of *him*? Yes, she thinks of me, and expects me when that yellow streak begins to glimmer in the west. I have seen her head turned towards my window; and then I pitch my friend Sophocles into the remotest corner, and go out for my afternoon stroll.

"*December* 10.—Yes, the dismal confession must be written, or the account between R. L. and self closed for ever. I am in love—seriously, desperately, unreasonably in love—with a young person whose social status is something between that of a parlour-maid and a nursery-governess. Could she be worse off than she is now? Could any turn in the wheel of fortune leave her in a lower place than that she now occupies? Scarcely!

I don't believe in those dismal histories which the Minerva Press was wont to disseminate. Susan is just the sort of girl to fall on her feet. Those shy, sensitive creatures always know how to take care of themselves, and often do remarkably well in life. It's your dashing, high-spirited, strong-minded girl who goes to the bad. Goodness knows I'm not a bad-hearted fellow. I can't look at such a girl as Susan without worrying myself about her future career. There's scarcely any sacrifice I wouldn't make—short of the sacrifice of my own prospects—in order to insure her welfare. Yes, the little stranger, let into my dwelling unawares, has strung his bow and twanged his arrow home to my heart. I am really in love this time. I used to feel savage with those St. B. fellows when they talked nonsense to Rosa; but I think I should annihilate the man who so much as looked at this girl. Yes; I am prepared to make any sacrifice—short of the destruction of my own prospects. Your really rich man, or your penniless beggar, can afford to make a fool of himself; but I stand just in that middle distance

between the golden lands of plenty and the sterile plains of poverty, in which a man must needs be peculiarly circumspect.

"17*th*.—I have broken the ice at last. What a little Puritan she is! And yet I know that she loves me, with the regular Haidee or Zuleika sort of devotion: would like to kneel at my feet and offer me tiresome flowers, when I was absorbed in the classic fogies, and all that sort of thing. A long interview on the esplanade this afternoon. I beat the ground with the greatest discretion; for it would have been the easiest thing in the world to frighten her. It must be a marriage—a *bonâ-fide* marriage, secret, of course. She won't object to that. But upon the other point I can see she would be inflexible. Those quiet people are always obstinate. Ay di me, my pretty Susy, I fear that you and I must say Good-by. And I am really over head and ears in that dismal pit. I am most absurdly fond of her; that's the worst of it. Yes, we must say Good-by. The catechisms in the rector's parlour and the Sunday-school have done their work, and Susan

Turner will be a drudge all her life rather than surrender those ridiculous prejudices which it is the fashion to implant in the minds of rustic youth. *Addio*, my pretty Susan. I cannot imagine any thing more delightful than our quiet walks in the cold gray twilight; I cannot conceive any eyes—out of a Murillo—so beautiful as those brown orbs of yours—orbs is the proper phrase, I think, where a fellow is sentimental;—but the price demanded is too heavy. One may buy gold in too dear a market; and ten years hence, with blighted prospects, and half-a-dozen children, I might grow tired of my white doe of what's-its-name, and fancy a blue-eyed Greuze—how wonderful that man was in his manipulation of violet-hued pupils swimming in enamelled whiteness!—instead of my Murillo.

"20*th*.—I began to pack my books the day before yesterday, and yet I linger. 'Tell me, my heart, if this be love?' Not much doubt about it, I fear. But only a day or two more, and then—and then good-by, pretty puritanical Susan, with your Sunday-school morality, and

all that innate obstinacy peculiar to quiet women. I shall have forgotten her in six weeks, I daresay. But then that consolatory idea of the future oblivion won't lessen the present anguish of parting. We may forget all about a gigantic triple-pronged carious tooth when we turn our back upon the dentist's torture-chamber, but the pang of extraction is none the less. I shall forget her, and some other eyes will haunt me in my sleep; but there must be a long blank interval of weariness before the Lethean waters can wash away that artless face. I have plumbed her simple mind to its uttermost depths, and have found nothing like deception or pretence. So we must part. I to go forth and do my best at opening the great oyster; she to remain here as my landlady's drudge and companion. Poor little thing! I hope she'll miss me when I go. I shouldn't like to think of her enjoying a flirtation with some new lodger—a City clerk, who would wear ready-made clothes bought somewhere in Shoreditch, and smoke cheap manillas. No, I shouldn't like to fancy her happy when I am gone. It wouldn't

have been pleasant to the Corsair to imagine Medora flirting with mercantile mariners in his absence.

"21*st*.—I have packed all my books, except a few German cribs. Perhaps it was as well, for my studies had grown very desultory. How can a fellow read hard when there is a pretty girl in the case, and he has been so profound an idiot as to fall in love with her? But 'it is written,' as the followers of the prophet observe, and I must go. I have told Susan. We had a very affecting interview yesterday. How the poor little girl cried. And I hate to see a woman cry; it's so excruciating to the feelings of a good-hearted fellow; and the prettiest woman's nose is apt to get just a *leetle* red when 'the tears come trickling down, down, down.' Oh, Susan, that I should quote that familiar ballad of Lord Lovell when I write of your sorrow! But I suppose there is something of the *persifleur* in my nature, for I don't often find myself very earnest about any thing. And so we walked up and down the esplanade; she crying, and I talking. I flatter myself I talked rather well. There was just that

dash of excitement about the business which makes a fellow talk well. But my eloquence was all of no avail; Alfred de Musset, Byron, George Sand, Rousseau, and Thomas Moore, all combined, cannot prevail against the tenets of the Sunday-school; and so we are to part, 'in silence and tears, half broken-hearted, to sever,' &c., unless I were prepared to sacrifice my prospects, and put the fatal noose about my neck.

"Bah! it would be too absurd, too utterly preposterous. Such things have been, and have always resulted in pretty much the same way. Your poet Shelley gets expelled from the University because he can't keep his convictions to himself, marries simple rustic maiden, grows tired of her, and falls in love with some one else, whereon rustic maiden drowns herself, whence unspeakable *esclandre* and confusion.

"*January* 2*d.*—No, the thing cannot be done; the sacrifice would be too great. The days of the Minerva Press are past. The yellow post-chaise, the lonely country inn, the college friend who is introduced in a surplice, and acts as

clergyman — alas! are not these exploded with the dark ages? Were there ever any such marriages, I wonder? or were they only figments of the romancer's brain? At any rate, any thing of that kind must be impossible nowadays. And then a man must be a consummate scoundrel who could devise such a plot. I don't pretend to the Sunday-school species of morality; but *nemo repente fuit turpissimus*, as Juvenal has it. I am not so bad as that.

"*5th.*—She is very unhappy; and how hard it seems to leave her to this drudgery and desolation—Coltonslough, and my landlady, and my landlady's children, all the year round! And she is just the 'creature, not too bright or good,' &c.; the very woman of all others for a cottage in the lake-districts, or a Devonshire fishing-village, or any pretty out-of-the-way haven, where a man might take his rest. And yet I must leave her here, baffled entirely by the Sunday-school precepts with which her shallow mind has been imbued. I have no time to play the Lovelace, and I don't want such a victory as

his. I have had tiresome letters from home. They will expect me to get my degree; and I am free to confess that my reading since I have been at Coltonslough has been the merest moonshine. Decidedly I must leave this place by to-night's express. 'Better to die by sudden shock,' &c.; and as for Susan, it is only a natural chapter in such a girl's history. She will break her heart, and then marry a small tradesman, who will give her a Paisley shawl and a black-silk gown to wear on Sundays.

"6*th*.—Another day, and I am still here. I was awake all last night, thinking of all manner of possibilities, or perhaps impossibilities. The yellow post-chaise and the college friend in a surplice are obsolete absurdities; but how about a marriage before the Registrar? Is there any thing so very impossible in a marriage before the Registrar—which shall not be, say, *too* binding? Why not a marriage before the Registrar, between eight and twelve in the forenoon, with open doors, in the presence of two witnesses, &c. &c.? You walk into an office very much

like any other office, and you see an official very much like any other official, and there is a trifling formula, and a little signing and countersigning, and so on, and the business is done. But even about this there would be a good deal of trouble, and the college friend would still be necessary, though not in a surplice—and the witnesses—and the office. *Is* the game worth the candle? Am I really so desperately in love? And then, again, supposing the game worth the cost of illumination, these sort of games are so apt to be dangerous; and awkward stories crop-up against one in afterlife; with perhaps Chancery suits, and so forth. No, it is too much trouble. It will be better for Susan and I to shake hands, like sensible people, and say Good-by.

"*7th.*—A very long talk with Susan. I told her that we must part; our roads in life lying separate, and so on. Poor child! her grief was something very terrible. We had wandered out to some lonely ground beyond the esplanade, leaving those abominable children to disport themselves as they pleased. We sat down upon a

little bank at the edge of a great ploughed field, with the gray sea before us. The poor child sobbed as if her heart would have broken. I am no deliberate Lovelace, but I suppose I have in this instance pursued the prey with something of a Mexican trapper's intensity. I never meant to be in earnest; but have been drifted, as it were, by the chances of the situation; and people who let lodgings at dull watering-places really should not employ such pretty parlour-maids. Poor, tender-hearted little Susy! I never thought she could have grown so fond of me, or that a little sentimental spouting, and a few pretty speeches, could have gone so far. I should have been a callous wretch if I had not been touched by her grief; and I was inexpressibly touched; so much so that I flung all good resolutions to swell the general heap of paving material for the halls of Pluto, and told my Susy that there was an alternative for this miserable parting, if she would—trust me—and consent to a marriage before the Registrar.

"She will trust me. I explained to her the nature of the ceremonial I proposed, and how all

unnecessary publicity and the ruin of my prospects might be avoided thereby. And then the poor little thing burst out with a whole string of romantic protestations.

"Did she want me to sacrifice my prospects? Oh no, no! Did she want to be acknowledged before the world as my wife? No, a thousand times. She knew very well that she was too ignorant and humbly educated to support such an honour. She only wanted to know herself that she was my wife, my own lawful wife, united to me by the laws of heaven and earth.

"The laws of heaven and earth as administered in a Registrar's office. I have cast prudence to the winds, and am now committed to the step which I only dreamed of as a possibility last night. I have a sort of foreboding that the business will bring me into trouble; but having gone so far now, am I to recede? And then I am really desperately in love with this Cornish girl.

"How is it to be done? These things seem so simple when one contemplates them in a dreamy reverie engendered by tobacco-smoke. It will be

rather a complicated business, I fear; and the college friend, that is the grand question. Who is to be the convenient college friend? Perhaps I had better sleep upon it.

"*8th.*—After a world of serious consideration, I can think of no one but my brother. He's a selfish beggar, who'd scarcely wet the tips of his fingers to save an entire ship's crew from drowning; but he owes me money, and ought to go through fire and water to serve me. At any rate, he is not troubled by any scruples or compunctions of the Sunday-school order; and then he's a clever fellow, and on the spot. I'll go up to town to-morrow, and sound him about it."

There was no more. The journal ended here; and Francis Tredethlyn sat staring at the last half-page, sorely puzzled as to how he was to read that broken history.

That the lines before him had been written by a heartless profligate he could scarcely doubt, little as he had been accustomed to sit in judgment upon his fellow-men. But he was slow to under-

stand the full measure of the writer's depravity. A more subtle mind than his was required to read the hidden meaning of that carelessly written diary. Francis Tredethlyn only understood that his cousin had fallen into the hands of a selfish worldling, who had been fascinated by her pretty face, but who set his own welfare and his own happiness before all thought of her love or sorrow.

"He meant to marry her," thought the young man; "thank heaven for that. No matter how secret or clandestine the marriage may have been, it shall be my task to find Susan, and to make that marriage public."

Mr. Tredethlyn went early the next day to Gray's Inn, there to hold solemn consultation with the chief of that firm which had transacted all Oliver Tredethlyn's legal affairs during a period of some forty years.

To Mr. Kursdale, Francis told all that he had been able to discover of his cousin Susan's history; and to the lawyer's hands he confided the manuscript volume surrendered to him by Mrs. Burfield.

"You'll be able to make more out of it than

I can, Mr. Kursdale," he said. "Heaven knows I read it carefully; but I can only understand that the man is a scoundrel, and that it was my cousin's evil fortune to love him. I wonder how it is that a simple, innocent country girl always does fall in love with a scoundrel, if he has only got a handsome face and a smooth tongue?"

The next day was Saturday, and Francis Tredethlyn's thoughts were strangely divided between the contemplation of his cousin's unknown wrongs and the expectation of a day in the sunny gardens and drawing-rooms at the Cedars. Late in the evening there came a letter from Mr. Kursdale, the solicitor:

"*Yourself and Another.*

"DEAR SIR,—After a very careful perusal of the Ms. volume intrusted to me by you yesterday, I regret to say that I can only come to one conclusion respecting the intentions of the writer.

"I believe that it was this person's design to involve Miss Susan Tredethlyn in a fictitious marriage, which should be, in fact, no marriage at all.

"A marriage before the Registrar would have been as entirely valid, if duly performed, as any religious solemnisation.

"I conclude, therefore, that the writer of the Ms. diary contemplated a sham ceremony, in the presence of some person falsely representing himself to be the Superintendent Registrar.

"I much fear that your cousin's simplicity would render her likely to be the dupe of any such plot.

"Should you wish to communicate with me further on this subject, I shall be glad to wait upon you at any time you may appoint.

"I am, dear Sir, yours very obediently,

"JAMES KURSDALE."

"A mock marriage!" thought Francis Tredethlyn. "Yes; I understand it all now. There was an insolence in his manner of writing of my pretty Susy that stung me to the very heart. No honest man ever wrote like that of any woman; *no* man would write like that of a woman whom he meant to make his wife."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAUGHT IN THE TOILS.

FRANCIS TREDETHLYN spent the bright summer Sunday afternoon and evening at the Cedars. Mr. Hillary generally filled his house with company on the day of rest; and hard-working commercial magnates, and lazy West-End loungers, were alike glad to spend their Sabbath amongst the flower-beds and trellised walks, under the shadow of black spreading cedars, or on the terrace by the river. The merchant's house was only another Star-and-Garter, where the *menu* was always irreproachable, and where one escaped that little bugbear so common to the close of all social entertainments, and known by the vulgar name of "Bill." Mr. Tredethlyn found the house full of strangers, and Miss Hillary very difficult of approach. He was not allowed to feel embar-

rassed, however; for Julia Desmond always happened to be in his neighbourhood, and he found her society as charming as on the previous occasion. She was so very handsome, and there was really something so bewildering about her dark eyes and white teeth, and fluent talk upon every possible subject, that the young man—who had never been accustomed to the society of well-educated women—may be forgiven if he admired her. He admired her, but not as he admired Maude Hillary. No thrill of half-fearful rapture stirred his pulses as he stood by Julia's side upon the moonlit terrace, looking down at the rippling water, darkened by the tremulous shadows of the trees; but the faintest flutter of Maude's airy flounces stirred his soul like a burst of music.

But she was only a beautiful, far-away creature, who never could have any part in his destiny. He acknowledged this in a half-despairing way; and then resigned himself to look at her only now and then from a distance, and to behold her always surrounded by those elegant amber-whiskered loungers, whose admiration of her love-

liness never made them awkward in her presence; who could approach her without suffering from a sudden determination of blood to the head; who could hover near her without trampling half a yard of her lace-flounce to destruction under the savage tread of a clumsy foot.

"Those fellows are fit to talk to her," he thought; "they've been brought up to it, I suppose: but I'm better out of her way; for even if she speaks to me, I make a fool of myself somehow, and feel as if I couldn't answer her. I get on better with Miss Desmond; she's so kind, and she doesn't seem to mind my being awkward and stupid."

Yes, Miss Desmond was very kind to the simple-hearted Cornishman. So kind is Madame Arachne to a big blundering blue-bottle fly that hovers ignorantly about the net she has spread for him. Julia had angled very patiently for the last two years in the great matrimonial fisheries, and had brought several fish to land, only to lose her hook and leave them to gasp and perish on the bank when she discovered their

quality. But now, for the first time, she knew she had a prey worthy her skill and patience. She had taken good care to ascertain that Francis Tredethlyn's thirty thousand a year was no mere figment of a gossip's brain, and she set herself deliberately to work to win this prize so newly offered for competition in the matrimonial market. Mr. Hillary interested himself in the young man's fortunes, and gave him some advice about the management of some of his uncle Oliver's numerous investments. This, of course, necessitated interviews at the merchant's offices in Moorgate Street, and no interview ever came to a close until Francis had received hospitable Mr. Hillary's invitation to "run down" to Twickenham.

The young man seemed always running down to the Cedars. He slept there sometimes, in a pretty chintz-curtained chamber, all rosebuds and maplewood, and from whose jasmine-festooned windows he looked out upon the river—the perpetual river, now shimmering in the moonlight, now twinkling and glancing in the sunshine, but

always "a thing of beauty and a joy" for the people who dwell upon its banks.

Yes, he was always riding down to the Cedars. He had departed very little from his simple habits; but he had bought a couple of horses at Tattersall's—such horses as a man who has been used to ride across wild moorland districts without saddle or stirrups from his earliest boyhood knows how to choose. He kept the horses at livery near his hotel, and he hired a smart young groom to attend to them, and even to ride behind him on occasions.

Miss Hillary grew accustomed to the young man's presence, and greeted him kindly when he came; but then she had so many friends, such enthusiastic female adorers in crisp muslins, who found the millionaire's daughter the dearest darling in the world, and were always eager to pour some new confidence into her willing ears. She had so many friends, so many admirers, that Francis Tredethlyn always found her more or less difficult of approach. And in the mean while there was Miss Desmond perpetually smiling

upon him, and talking to him, and listening to him.

So things went on very pleasantly for Mr. Tredethlyn, until one day his eyes were very suddenly opened to a fact that well-nigh overpowered him. He was lounging on the terrace one sunny afternoon, and, for a wonder, Julia Desmond was not by his side. She had been summoned into the midst of a conclave of pretty girls holding solemn discussion with Maude Hillary on the lawn. Francis was looking down at the water, as it was his habit to do, and thinking. He was leaning against the balustrade of the terrace, all amongst the foliage which had been so bright when he had first come to the Cedars, but which was brown and withered now: he was watching the dead leaves slowly drifting in the wind, and dropping one by one into the water; and he was thinking of his cousin Susan. Nothing had yet come of his search for her. Perhaps he had left the matter too much in the hands of his lawyers, trusting to their legal acumen for the unravelment of the tangled skein. It may be that he had been a

little too much at the Cedars, absorbed in the delights of a new existence. This afternoon, watching the drifting leaves upon the river, the gold and crimson tints of autumn on the woodland and on the hill-side, Francis Tredethlyn remembered how the time had slipped by him, and how little nearer he was to the discovery of Susan Tredethlyn's fate than when he had listened to Martha's story in the dreary Cornish grange, and had sworn to go to the end of the world in search of his cousin. There was some feeling of remorse in his mind as he thought of the past three months, the idle days in that luxurious river-side retreat, the billiard-playing and cigar-smoking, the pleasant rides to and fro in the dewy evenings, with genial gentlemanlike companions, who thought him a good fellow, and very rarely laughed at his ignorant simplicity.

He was roused from his reverie now by one of these young men, Mr. Montagu Somerset, of the War-Office, the scion of a noble house, the presumptive heir to nothing a year, and one of the most hopelessly devoted of Maude Hillary's adorers.

"Why, Tredethlyn," exclaimed the young man, without removing a gigantic cigar from between his lips, "how dismally you're staring at that water! It looks as if you were contemplating *felo de se*, b' Jove. What's the row, old boy? and how do you happen to be alone? Where's the *fiancée?*"

"I—I was thinking of some family matters, not very pleasant ones," Mr. Tredethlyn answered simply.

"But where's the *future?*"

"The what?"

"The *future*—Mrs. Francis Tredethlyn that is to be—the Desmond. Why, has the lovely Julia deserted her Frank? Why, you dear, simple old baby, how you blush! Is it a crime to be in love with a handsome girl? I only wish your young affections had fixed themselves on one of my five sisters—all most amiable girls, but without so much as a spoonful of what our lively neighbours call *potage.*"

Francis Tredethlyn stared aghast at the young official.

"Why, you don't suppose—you don't think that I—that Miss Desmond—that—"

"You know those silversmiths on the Boulevards—no, you don't know Paris, by the bye. Well, dear boy, there are Parisian silversmiths who make a great display in their shop-windows by means of a concatenation of table-spoons and a strong flare of gas; but I doubt if in all Paris there was ever such a notorious case of spoons as the present; and I don't blame you, my dear Tredethlyn. If I were not Alexander, I would be the other person. If I were not madly and hopelessly in love with blue-eyed Maude, I should fling myself at the feet of dark-eyed Julia: such teeth, and such a generally regal *tournure*, with thirty thousand a year, ought to make a sensation. Frank, I congratulate you! Bless you, my boy, and be happy!" Mr. Somerset wrung his friend's hand with effusion.

"But, my dear Somerset—but, upon my word and honour," cried Mr. Tredethlyn, in extreme terror and perplexity, "Miss Desmond has been very kind to me; and feeling myself out of place

here, I've been very grateful for her kindness; but, as I am an honest man, not one word has ever passed between us upon any but the commonest subjects; and I am sure that neither she nor I have the slightest idea of—"

"Oh, you haven't, eh?" asked Montagu Somerset, taking his cigar from his mouth, and staring at it in a contemplative manner, as he knocked away the ash; "never mind about Miss Desmond; *you* haven't any idea of making her mistress of yourself and your property, real and personal, eh? You admire her very much, and are very grateful to her for being civil to you, and so on, but you have no idea of making her an offer of marriage?"

"No more than I have of making you such an offer."

"Then in that case," replied Mr. Somerset deliberately, "all I have to say is to this effect: look out for squalls; when you are coasting on a shore renowned for its quicksands, you'd better beware of any strange light you may see ahead, for the illumination generally means danger. When you

meet with such a girl as the Desmond, don't trifle with her. Of course it's very pleasant to ride and drive, and play billiards, and loiter through a summer month or so with a handsome girl, meaning nothing serious all the time; and it *is* to be done with impunity, if you're careful in your selection of the young lady. But I don't think Julia Desmond is exactly the sort of girl you should try it on with. There are men in our place, apoplectic old fogies in starched neckcloths and no end of waistcoat, who knew the Desmond's father; he was a south-of-Ireland man and a notorious duellist. They say that Julia inherits his eyes and teeth."

"But you don't mean to say that I've done Miss Desmond any wrong?" cried Francis. "How should I be otherwise than grateful to her when she was kind to me, and set me at my ease somehow, and made me feel a little less like an Ojibbeway Indian suddenly let loose amongst fashionable people? How should I imagine that she would think of me except as—as Miss Hillary thinks of me?" His voice grew

nel Desmond's daughter. Julia had been clever enough to set the simple Cornishman entirely at his ease in her presence, and having done that, all the rest followed naturally enough. It was to Miss Desmond that Francis Tredethlyn confided his opinions upon every subject; it was to Miss Desmond that he applied for enlightenment when his ignorance fenced him about with cloud and darkness, and seemed to shut him out from the people round him. When the visitors at the Cedars were busy in the animated discussion of some new book whose name Francis had never heard, and whose contents would have been utterly beyond his untrained understanding, Julia would explain to him the nature of the volume, simplifying the subject with a dexterity that was all her own, but never humiliating her companion by any display of her own superiority. If art was the subject of discussion, Julia insidiously demonstrated to the Cornishman the merits and demerits of any given picture. So Francis Tredethlyn had been considerably benefited by three months of intimacy with a handsome and ac-

complished woman, and he began to feel something like a well-disposed Maori who had been admitted into familiar intercourse with a family of friendly settlers.

But all this time, in spite of handsome, dark-eyed Julia's kindness, in spite of all the benefits to be derived from intimate relations with such agreeable people as the guests who were always to be found at Twickenham, the one charm that had held the young man constant to the Cedars, —like some spell-bound knight in a fairy story, who cannot leave an enchanted castle, though he knows that peril and ruin lurk within its walls, —the one supreme influence that had taken possession of Francis Tredethlyn had been the presence of Maude Hillary. From first to last his faith had never wavered, but his devotion had been the servile worship of an idolater, who was prepared to find his divinity hard and merciless. No thought of ever being any thing nearer to Maude Hillary than he now was entered the young man's mind. She was beautiful, amiable, loving,—for had he not seen her with her father?

She was all that is most lovely and adorable in womankind: but she was not for him. In her presence his ignorance and awkwardness seemed to weigh him down to the very dust; and yet she was never unkind to him, or supercilious, or insolent. She was only indifferent: but oh the bitterness of her indifference! the anguish of the slavish worshipper who prostrates himself before his idol, and knows all the while that it is stone, and cannot have pity upon him! Again and again Francis Tredethlyn had determined that he would come no more to the Cedars. He would call on Mr. Hillary in the City some morning, and thank him for his hospitable kindness; and then he would buy a commission in a cavalry regiment newly ordered for Indian service.

"Why should I be always coming here?" he thought. "They're all very good to me, the young swells. But I feel awkward amongst them still; and even if I could fall into their ways and make myself like them, which I can't, where would be the good? I don't want to be a 'swell;' I should like to be a soldier, with a regiment of

glorious fellows to call me captain; or a farmer, with half a county to ride over, and a thousand sturdy labourers to take wages from me on a Saturday night; or a merchant, like Mr. Hillary, with a small fleet of ships on the high seas. That sort of thing would be life. But to dawdle in a billiard-room; or lounge at Tattersall's, and buy a horse one doesn't want, out of sheer idleness, and sell him at a loss three weeks afterwards; or to go for a yachting excursion off the Isle of Wight, with men to do all the work, and nothing to do one's self except lie on one's back and smoke and drink pale ale all day long: I can't fancy such a life as that. So, why should I come here any more? I can't fall naturally into these people's habits. I think sometimes that I was happier out yonder, brushing the captain's clothes and talking to the convicts. What a fellow that Surly Bill was! By Jove, that man *had* seen life!"

Mr. Tredethlyn, lounging perpetually in the gardens by the river, conscious of his incapability of breaking the spell that bound him, thought, with some touch of envy, of the brilliant career

of his late acquaintance, Surly Bill the burglar. But now the Cornishman had been all at once aroused from the pleasant torpor which had crept upon him in this modern Castle of Indolence. All that was most generous in the young man's nature arose in revolt against the thought that he had wronged Julia Desmond. "It seems so hard that she should have set these people talking about her by her kindness to an ignorant fellow like me. It must do a girl harm to have her name bandied about by an idle young fellow like Somerset. And she stands alone in the world too, with no father or brother to take her part. I ought to have told that fellow to hold his tongue, and I will too, before I leave this house to-night. But *this* decides me, at any rate. I've been here too much; I'll buy a commission and go out to India, and the lawyers must look after poor little Susy."

CHAPTER XIV.

VERY PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

THE river was gray and dim in the twilight by this time; for the first half of October was gone, and the dusky shadows gathered early on Mr. Hillary's lawn. Francis Tredethlyn found the gardens deserted when he left the terrace, and walked slowly towards the house, where lights were gleaming in innumerable windows. The young man had only ridden down to Twickenham that morning, and had no special engagement to dine at the Cedars.

"I'll go round to the stables at once," he thought, "and I can call in Moorgate Street to-morrow, and tell Mr. Hillary that I think of going abroad. Why should I see *her* again? The sight of her will only make me foolish, and keep me here in spite of myself."

The lady thus vaguely alluded to was not Miss Desmond; but when Francis Tredethlyn entered Mr. Hillary's house by the first open window that presented itself on the upper terrace, he found himself in a little study much affected by the ladies of the household, and came suddenly upon a female figure sitting alone in the dark.

Something like a guilty pang shot through him as he recognised that stately figure, even in the shadowy obscurity of the unlighted room. In the next moment there was a rustling of silk, and Miss Desmond had risen and was facing him in the twilight.

"Yes, it *is* Mr. Tredethlyn," she said, presently. "What have you been doing with yourself all the afternoon? There has been a grand discussion about some amateur theatricals, concerning which Maude Hillary is absolutely bewitched, and we want you to act."

"I think you've got plenty of fellows who'll act better than I can, Miss Desmond; though I did try my hand at the business once in Van Diemen's Land; and I'd be glad to make myself

useful in any way that would please Miss Hillary, if it was to dress myself as a footman and carry a tea-tray or a scuttle of coals; but I think I shall be leaving England before the [illegible] off; in point of fact, I think I shall [illegible] directly."

"Leaving England!"

The expression of those two words could scarcely have been more tragical than it was; and yet for once in a way Miss Desmond was *not* acting. All in a moment she saw the fair edifice which she had schemed to build for herself crumbling into ruin and chaos.

"Leaving England!" she repeated,—"you think of leaving England, Mr. Tredethlyn?"

She put her hands to her forehead with a little tragic gesture; and Francis Tredethlyn wished that he had entered the house by any other door or window than that which he had chosen.

Julia's dismay was entirely real; for the disappointment was very bitter to this young lady, who had built up a fair future for herself on the foundation of Francis Tredethlyn's wealth. The

grim walls of Castle Desmond, the silver waters of the Shannon, the green hill-sides and lonely valleys [redacted] themselves into a picture that shut out t[redacted]m, and then melted into gray blanki[redacted]ad meant to do such great things with Francis Tredethlyn's thirty thousand a year!

The young man stood looking at her in as much embarrassment as if he had been guilty of some wilful deception. He was so little of a coxcomb, that it was very difficult for him to imagine that his sudden departure could give pain to the brilliant Julia. He was so entirely simple and true-hearted, that no suspicion of Miss Desmond's mercenary views had any place in his mind.

There was a very brief pause, and then Julia murmured, in low, half-broken accents,

"You are really going away?—but why?"

"Oh, Miss Desmond, I scarcely like to tell you why; and yet it's not altogether on that account," answered Francis vaguely. "There are other reasons. I am not in my right place amongst such people as I meet here. I'm a rough, unedu-

cated fellow, and idleness doesn't suit me. I want to be of some use in the world. Why, I felt myself a better man out yonder, without sixpence in my pocket, than I am to-day, in spite of Oliver Tredethlyn's money. So I mean to buy a commission and go out to India, where there's some fighting to be done."

"You are not telling me the truth, Mr. Tredethlyn. *This* is not your real reason for running away from the Cedars, as if the house were infected."

"My dear Miss Desmond, I—you have been so kind to me—you have made me feel so much at home here, where, but for you, I must have felt myself so miserably out of place."

"Why should you be out of place amongst these people?" cried Julia, drawing up her head with a proud gesture, "unless," she murmured, in a thoughtful undertone—"unless because these people are so much beneath you."

Miss Desmond had entirely recovered herself by this time. All at once, after sitting a long time at the table, playing her cards with infinite

tact and patience,—all at once she found herself losing the game, and saw that only the boldest play could help her. But Julia was equal to the situation. The second of December had come upon her very suddenly; but she did not despair of triumphing by a *coup d'état*.

"Tell me the truth, Mr. Tredethlyn," she said, looking Francis full in the face, with her eyes and teeth gleaming in the twilight; "why are you going to leave this house? Why do you talk of hurrying away from England?"

"Because—because—I have done you a wrong in absorbing so much of your society, Miss Desmond, and the people here have begun to mix your name with mine. I cannot bear that you, who are so superior to me, should be humiliated by such an association; especially when there is no foundation for their talk," Francis Tredethlyn added, in considerable embarrassment.

"Oh, I understand it all now," answered Julia, with an unutterable bitterness in her tone; "you have been warned against me, Mr. Tredethlyn. I am only a fortune-huntress, and I

have been spreading my toils about your innocent footsteps, and it is only by flight that you can save yourself. Oh yes!" she cried, with an ironical laugh, which seemed to express a keener anguish than another woman's wildest sob, "I know how these people talk!"

"Miss Desmond, on my honour—"

"Mr. Tredethlyn, on *my* honour, I know the world better than you do. If you had devoted yourself to any other woman in this house, to any daughter of that mercantile aristocracy in which Mr. Hillary rules supreme, no sneering comments would have greeted your ear. But what am I—the daughter of the Desmonds of Desmond—amongst these people? What am I but Maude Hillary's dependent and companion? I am poor, and I endure poverty in its most cruel bitterness; for I am poor amongst the vulgar rich. Who can give me credit for sincerity? who dares trust in my friendship? I am a well-bred pauper, a fortune-huntress, an adventuress, a creature whose smiles are to be dreaded, whose society is to be avoided. Oh, Francis Tredethlyn," cried Julia, with a

sudden shiver of agony, which would have done credit to a Rachel, "*I know so well* what has been said to you. Go—go at once. You are wise to accept the warning conveyed in these people's insolent insinuations. Go—there is a gulf between you and me, for you are rich and I am poor. Beware of me even when I seem most sincere. Remember that I am a pauper, and the descendant of paupers—paupers who shed their blood and squandered their fortunes in a losing cause; paupers who died for the love of honour and loyalty, two words that would seem the emptiest sounds to merchants and tradesmen. Oh, Mr. Tredethlyn, have pity upon me, and go."

And then Miss Desmond broke down all at once into a burst of hysterical sobbing, and stretching out her hand towards the back of a *prie-dieu* chair standing near her, tottered as if she would have fallen. She did not fall, however; for before her hand could reach the *prie-dieu*, Francis Tredethlyn's strong arm was round her.

"Miss Desmond," he cried, "Julia! why do you talk like this? Do you think that any base

thought about you ever entered *my* brain? Fortune-huntress, adventuress—did I ever wrong you in my inmost thoughts by such a name as that?"

"No," answered Julia softly. "*You* are too noble; and yet you may have been influenced by others. Why should you think better of me than others think? Why should not you too despise me?"

Her voice was broken by sobs, and she was still supported by Mr. Tredethlyn's arm. He felt that she was trembling violently. He could just distinguish her handsome profile in the dusk, and the tears glittering upon her dark lashes.

"Despise you, Julia! you who are so superior to me! Do you forget what I am? Have I not much greater reason to fear your contempt? And you talk of poverty, as if that were so deep a suffering, while I am so rich, and care so little for my money. Share it with me, Julia. I'm only a poor waif and stray as it is; but with such a woman as you for my wife I might be of some good in the world. Heaven knows you are welcome to my fortune, Miss Desmond. If you were

a man, and my comrade, I would say, Share it with me as my brother and my friend. But you are a woman, and I can only say, Be my wife."

Julia withdrew herself from the supporting arm.

"Ah, Mr. Tredethlyn," she said, in an icy kind of voice, "this is the bitterest insult of all. The Desmonds do not marry for money; they only marry where they are beloved, and can love again."

"How can I expect that you can love me?" asked Francis. "Do you think I can forget that I am an ignorant boor, suddenly thrown amongst people whose habits of life, whose very thoughts, are strange to me?"

"And you would marry a woman without so much as asking for her love?"

"I would ask for her friendship and her fidelity. I shouldn't care to exact an uneven bargain, Miss Desmond; and I doubt if I could give much more myself," the young man answered, rather coldly. But at the sound of a stifled sob from Julia he changed his tone all at

once; a thousand generous impulses were stirred in him by the aspect of her distress. He was nothing more than a child in the hands of this brilliant young Irishwoman.

"Dear Miss Desmond," he cried, "I seem destined to offend and grieve you. If you will share my fortune, if you will accept my best friendship and fidelity, my whole life shall prove to you how much I admire and respect you. If you reject my offer, I can only say—"

But Julia did not allow him to finish the sentence, which she foresaw would be expressive of complete resignation to her adverse decision.

"Oh, Francis," she exclaimed, "you offer me your *fortune!*" There was something sublime in her contemptuous enunciation of this last word. "You ask me to accept your friendship, when I have been weak and mad enough to LOVE YOU." She was not Rachel any longer; she was Madame Dorval, all melting tenderness and womanly pathos. She covered her face with her hands, and then, with something between a sob and a shudder, rushed suddenly from the room, and

hurried along the dusky staircase and passages to her own apartment.

The candles were lighted on the dressing-table; but there was no intrusive handmaiden to annoy Miss Desmond by her watchful glances, her mute interrogation. Julia looked at her reflection in the glass, and saw herself flushed and triumphant, with traces of tears upon her cheeks.

"And my eyes are really wet," she thought; "but then the chance was such a good one, and so nearly lost. What a good, simple-hearted fellow he is! and how happy any reasonable woman might be with him—and thirty thousand a year! Ah, Maude Hillary! it was very pretty and childish and nice of you, coming to wake me out of my sleep on your last birthday, to show me the set of diamonds and opals papa had bribed your maid to slip under your pillow before you awoke; but *I* will show you diamonds before long that shall make you ashamed of that birthday trumpery."

Miss Desmond rolled her black hair into a

great smooth knot at the back of her head; and she put on a dress of that fugitive golden yellow, in which there is an artful intermingling of silvery sheen, and which milliners call maize—a bewilderingly beautiful colour when seen in conjunction with a handsome brunette. The loungers who dined at the Cedars that evening declared that Julia Desmond had never looked so splendid. Francis Tredethlyn sat by her at dinner, and was near her all the evening: and at night, when he found himself alone in the pretty chintz-curtained chamber that he had so often occupied of late, the young man seated himself by one of the windows, and, pushing open the sash, looked out at the quiet river rippling softly under the stars.

"And she is to be my wife," he thought; "she is very handsome, and I ought to be proud to think that she can care for such a fellow as I. And yet—" His head sank forward on his folded arms, and the image of a beautiful creature smiled before him in all the dazzling brightness of an opium-eater's dream. Francis Tredethlyn gave one long regretful sigh as he raised his head, and

looked moodily out at the distant woodland on the other side of the river.

"What can it matter whom I marry?" he asked himself bitterly; "would *she* ever think of me, if I were to come to this house every day for ten years at a stretch? Why, her dogs are more to her and dearer to her twenty times than I am. And Julia Desmond loves me, and thinks me better than those fellows with the yellow whiskers, who are always talking of new books and new music. They please *her;* but Julia despises them. Am I such a wretch that I cannot be grateful for a sensible woman's affection? I *am* grateful to her. I am proud to think that she will be my wife. But I wish I was back in Van Diemen's Land, blacking the captain's boots, and smoking shag tobacco with Surly Bill the burglar."

After that dramatic little scene in the twilight study at the Cedars, every thing went on velvet. Julia was triumphant; Maude was delighted and sympathetic. What could be more charming or more proper than that Julia should marry a man

with thirty thousand a year for his fortune? The only hindrance to universal happiness in a very delightful world was the fact that so many people had to do *without* thirty thousand a year, Miss Hillary thought, whenever she gave her mind to the study of political economy.

"And you will be so rich, dear Julia," Maude said, as she kissed her friend; "and if Harcourt and I are very poor—as we must be, unless papa gives his consent by and bye—you'll take us for a drive in the Park sometimes, won't you? And if you give many parties in the season, I sha'n't be able to come to them; for you wouldn't like to see me always in the same dress—like those poor people at the Union—and I shall be obliged to get a set of black-lace flounces, like Reder—you never saw Reder, my last German governess but one—and put them on pink silk one day, and blue the next, and so on; it's very troublesome, and the flounces don't generally come straight, but then it looks as if one had so many dresses. Of course you'll have boxes at *both* houses, Julia, and on the grand tier? and you'll buy a place in

the country—and oh, where do you mean to live in town?"

Miss Desmond answered all these eager queries very demurely. Francis would make all arrangements for their future life, she said; he *had* certainly promised her the two opera-boxes; he had made inquiries about the one house that was to be let in Park Lane; and he was anxious to discover her favourite county before taking any steps towards the purchase of an estate.

"But you know he is such a dear good fellow, and has such a knack of guessing all my fancies, that really I never like to suggest any thing," Miss Desmond concluded, modestly. But, somehow or other, without making any very direct suggestions, Julia had so contrived matters, that in a few weeks her affianced husband had gratified many of the desires that had been smouldering in her breast ever since the earliest dawn of girlhood.

Already the "family jools" of the Desmonds had been consigned to the oblivion of one of Julia's shabbiest trunks, and diamonds now twinkled on

Miss Desmond's neck and arms, and gleamed here and there in her black hair, when she came down to dinner in her maize silk dress. Her toilette-table was all of a glitter with the rings she drew off her slim fingers when she disrobed at night, before the looking-glass which had so often reflected a gloomy, discontented face, but which now only gave back triumphant smiles.

She was an adventuress perhaps, and her triumph was an ignoble one; but she was not altogether base. She was prepared to be a good wife to the man whom she had brought to her feet by force of feminine strategy. She did not love Francis Tredethlyn; and indeed she seemed to be made of a sterner stuff than that out of which the women who can love are fashioned. She did not love her affianced husband; but she meant to be as faithful and devoted as the most loving wife in Christendom. If she intended to raise herself upon the platform of her husband's wealth, she meant that he should mount with her. Already she had lifted him several stages on the social ladder. From the very first her watchful care had

saved him from a hundred small solecisms, and in the more intimate relationship of the last few weeks her refining influence had been almost magical in its effects. The good old blood of the Tredethlyns asserted itself, and Julia found her task an easy one.

"I don't want you to be like those Government-clerks, and magazine-writers, and embryo Q.C.'s," she said to him sometimes. "I like you to be big and deep-voiced and—just a little clumsy. The Knights-Templars, and Crusaders, and that sort of people must have been clumsy on account of their armour. I always fancy I hear the clank of spurs when you come into a room; and when you sit in Parliament you must be the soldier's friend, you know, and make great speeches about rations, and court-martial verdicts, and discipline, and all that sort of thing; and I shall come into the ladies' gallery, and strain my eyes by peering at you through that horrible grating. You will look so handsome, with your head thrown a little back, and your hand in your waistcoat."

Now this kind of talk from a handsome woman,

whom he knows to be infinitely his intellectual superior, can scarcely be displeasing to the most strong-minded of men; and, unluckily, Francis Tredethlyn was not very strong-minded. He looked down at his Julia with a sheepish smile, and acknowledged her pretty flatteries in the lamest possible manner; but when he came to the Cedars next morning, he brought with him the biggest emerald-headed serpent that he had been able to find among the jewellers of the West End, and coiled it about his Julia's wrist. He was grateful to her for all her tender smiles and pleasant speeches — all the more grateful, perhaps, because of that uncomfortable knowledge of the cold void in his own heart, where love for his promised wife should have been. So he brought her all manner of costly tribute in the way of rings and bracelets, and necklaces and head-gear; and he bought her a three-hundred-guinea hunter at Tattersall's, so that she should no longer ride Maude Hillary's horses in the Twickenham lanes. Sometimes, in spite of himself, even when Julia was most agreeable, the thought came upon him

that he would only too gladly have given her the whole of his fortune if by such a gift he might have freed himself from the promise that bound him to her.

"But if I were free to-morrow, *she* would not care for me," he thought; "and what would be the use of my liberty?"

CHAPTER XV.

A COMMERCIAL CRISIS.

THE private theatricals at the Cedars were postponed till Christmas, and in the middle of November Mr. Hillary removed his household to a big bow-windowed habitation at the western end of Brighton. Francis Tredethlyn followed, as in duty bound, and spent a great portion of his life in hurrying to and fro between London and Brighton by express trains. Never had a better adorer done suit and service to a mistress. There were no lovers' quarrels, no temporary estrangements between these two people. A serene and cloudless sky heralded the coming splendour of their union, and Maude declared again and again that she had never seen such a model pair of lovers.

"Harcourt and I were always quarrelling, you

know, Julia," she said; "but then we were both such horribly jealous creatures. I didn't like his turning over music for other girls; though I suppose he was right, poor fellow, and a man must either turn over music or shut himself from society altogether. And he didn't like my going down to dinner with people in crack cavalry regiments; but I'm afraid we rather enjoyed ourselves when we quarrelled, and I used to feel as if it would be the easiest thing in the world to part from him for ever, and go into a convent, or marry somebody I hated, or something of that kind; and then directly we *had* parted, I used to get so silly and miserable, and used to write him such penitent letters, taking all the blame upon myself, and making an idiot of him. But it's so nice to see you and Mr. Tredethlyn, and I'm sure he'll be the dearest husband in the world, Julia, and you'll be able to twist him round your little finger."

It was not with a feeling of unalloyed pleasure that Miss Desmond accepted her friend's congratulations. She was quite ready to admit that Francis Tredethlyn was a model lover, and pro-

mised to be the most submissive husband that ever bowed himself before a clever wife's dominion. His presents were munificent, his attention was unfailing, his temper serenely even; and yet there were times when Julia Desmond felt that all was not quite as it should have been.

She had angled very successfully, and the fish she had landed was a splendid prize, victoriously snatched from all other anglers; but oh, what a difference there is between that poor deluded fish, entrapped out of the free waters by the cruel hook of the angler, and the willing bird which flies, of its own loving impulse, to the breast where it fain would shelter!

Julia Desmond knew that, in securing a husband, she had not won for herself a lover; and the knowledge pained and humiliated her. It was a small thing that she should not love Francis; but it seemed very hard that Francis should not love her. Her womanly tact would have stood in the place of affection, and she would have been lavish in the expenditure of a spurious coin, in the way of pretty words and tender looks, which

should have had all the glitter and some of the vibration of the real mintage. But with Francis it was altogether different. The young man had no power to simulate; and there was a deadly coldness in his wooing that chilled the proud Irish girl's heart.

"Are they worth the humiliation?" she thought sometimes, when she contemplated her diamonds before the lighted glass in her bedroom at Brighton. "They are very big and brilliant and costly; but I've seen myself look handsomer with a scrap of scarlet ribbon twisted in my hair, than I look to-night with all these stars and crosses and serpents flashing and twinkling about me. And then when I go down stairs, I must go through all the old stereotyped business; and when I thank him for the flowers that he sent me this morning, he will look at me with his cold eyes, and tell me he is pleased to have given me pleasure. What is he but a clod—a mere clod, nothing but a clod? I ought to remember that; and yet I am angry with him because he does not love me. Why can I not be thankful for my good fortune, and accept my

future husband for what he is,—a respectable, well-behaved ploughman, whom an accident has endowed with thirty thousand a year?"

Perhaps Miss Desmond did not particularly care to answer that question which she put to herself in so impatient a spirit. And yet it was a question that might have been answered, had she cared to fathom the lower deeps of her own mind. But then there *are* questions which are better left unanswered. Why was she angry with Francis Tredethlyn for that passionless serenity of manner which was so nearly akin to indifference? Why? unless it was because in her own heart there lurked the consciousness that the unpolished Cornishman *might* have been a very different kind of lover; and that beneath his cold exterior there were slumbering embers which might have blazed into glory, had one special torch been applied to them.

Yes, Julia knew this, and the knowledge was a perpetual poison that embittered the wine of success. The pride of the Desmonds had not been entirely trodden out beneath the iron heel of

poverty. This girl, who had not been too proud to set herself to ensnare a rich husband, was yet proud enough to feel the bitterness of her degradation.

"If he only loved me," she thought, "I should feel that the bargain was a fair one. But to know that, at best, he only submits to the force of circumstances! He has been drifted into the position of a lover, and he performs the duties exacted of him; just like some non-dancing man who has been persuaded to dance in order to fill the last place in a quadrille, and who dawdles listlessly through the figures, and almost yawns in the face of his partner. And yet I have seen him look at *her* until the dull clay of which he is made seemed to change into a thing of life and fire."

And then Miss Desmond was fain to turn to her new jewel-case for consolation, and to beguile her mind from unpleasant thoughts by the consideration of all those grand things that may be done with thirty thousand a year.

If the young ladies of the household thought it a pleasant thing to spend the brief November afternoons on that delightful esplanade beside the sea, Mr. Hillary did not find a residence in Brighton so entirely convenient. A great deal of his time was spent in journeyings to and fro by the best and quickest express train in England: and there were days when even the facilities of a Brighton railway would not enable the merchant to take his dinner in the society of his beautiful daughter and her companion. There were occasions on which the two girls sat for a wearisome hour or so, trying vainly to amuse themselves by some feminine occupation, or to beguile the time by some feminine discourse, while the soup grew cold and the Brightonian cook grew angry; and then at last were fain to sit down at nine o'clock, and make a dismal pretence of dining without the head of the household.

"I sometimes think so much railway travelling must be bad for papa," Maude said. "I am afraid it must shake him a little; though riding in the Brighton express is almost as good as sit-

ting in one's own room. I fancy papa has not looked so well lately. I have begged him to see Mr. Desborough, our Twickenham doctor, or some London physician; but it's no use, for he won't listen to me. I can't tell you how uneasy I am about him, Julia. He has had so many of his bad headaches lately; and then he says the business in Moorgate Street has been so heavy. Ah, Julia! what is the good of being rich, if papa must work as he does?"

Miss Desmond shrugged her shoulders.

"Business men seem scarcely to exist out of their offices," she said rather scornfully. She always took care to let Maude know that she looked down upon the Twickenham splendour and its commercial sources. "I daresay your papa will devote himself to money-making as long as he lives."

"I sometimes think we might have been happier if we had been poorer," Maude said dreamily, by and bye. "I can't help fancying how we might have lived in some quiet country place, in a low-roofed, old-fashioned cottage,

with a garden all round it and a churchyard close by, and the smell of cows and the cooing of pigeons; and then I need not have been separated from——" She did not finish the sentence; she was talking to herself rather than to Julia. Her face was beautified by an inexpressible softness and tenderness as she murmured that broken sentence. Her thoughts wandered back to the time in which she and Harcourt Lowther had sworn eternal constancy, standing with their hands locked together in the dim summer twilight, on the bank of the shadowy river. She thought of that time, and all the freshness of feeling that had gone down with it came back upon her suddenly like a breath of air from a distant ocean. How frivolous her life had been since then!—how selfish and useless! What a round of dress and decoration, and hurry and weariness! Harcourt Lowther's last letter was in her pocket as she sat musing despondently by the hired Brighton hearth;—his last letter, a most melancholy epistle, full of despairing lamentations about the bitterness of separation and the hard-

ships of Van Diemen's Land." And over and above all these feminine perplexities which tormented poor loving Maude, there seemed real cause for anxiety in the state of Mr. Hillary's health. It was not that the merchant himself complained; he did not complain, and, indeed, appeared to resent any inquiries as to his state, even when those inquiries came from such a privileged person as his only child. But every morning at the breakfast-table, sitting opposite to her father in the bright sunlight, Maude could see a darker shade under Mr. Hillary's eyes, a more weary look about his haggard face. She defied his anger very often, and pleaded earnestly with him, imploring him to consult a physician; but his answer was always very much the same.

"I am subject to this sort of headache; my work in Moorgate Street is peculiarly hard just now. Pray do not trouble yourself, Maude; there is not the least occasion for any uneasiness about my health."

With such assurances as these Miss Hillary was compelled to be satisfied. There had been

an air of coldness, or almost displeasure, in her father's manner to her lately, and Maude found to her surprise that he was by no means pleased with the matrimonial engagement that had arisen between Julia Desmond and Francis Tredethlyn.

"Engaged to *her!*" the merchant exclaimed, when his daughter carried him the news of Julia's conquest,—"engaged to Julia Desmond! Why, I fully believed that he came to Twickenham on your account, Maude. I said nothing to you about the matter, because girls have sometimes such absurd notions, and I thought it better to let things take their course. And so Julia has entrapped him, has she? I ought to have been on my guard against Ryan O'Brien Desmond's daughter."

"How can you talk like that, papa?" cried Miss Hillary. "I'm sure Julia and Mr. Tredethlyn are really in love with each other, and dear Julia is perfectly disinterested. And then, if Mr. Tredethlyn had been ever so much in love with me—and I'm sure he never cared the least bit about me,—how could you suppose that I could

ever dream of marrying him; when I—when he's such a very common kind of person?"

Harcourt Lowther's name had been almost trembling on Miss Hillary's lips, but she had remembered her father's aversion to that name, and had modified the conclusion of her sentence in deference to his prejudices.

"A very common kind of person!" repeated Lionel Hillary, in a thoughtful tone; "yes, yes, my dear, I daresay he is, I daresay he is. But I've seen women as beautiful as you married to commoner men than Francis Tredethlyn."

And then, after a brief silence, the merchant's manner changed all of a sudden; he took his daughter in his arms, and pressed his lips upon her forehead with an almost passionate fondness.

"My darling! my darling!" he cried, "do you think it wouldn't please me to see you married to a man you could love?"

Maude looked up into his face with a sweet smile upon her own: her lips parted, and in the next moment Harcourt Lowther's name would have been spoken and his cause pleaded by those inno-

cent lips. But it seemed as if her father in a manner anticipated what she would have said; for he put her from him suddenly, and turned away with a faint shiver of pain.

"I am very sorry to hear of this engagement between Julia and that young man," he said, with his face averted from his daughter, and his hands nervously shuffling among the papers on the table before him; "I am very much vexed. There, go, Maude; you don't understand, you can't understand. Go, my dear; I'm busy."

No more than this had ever been said between the father and daughter upon the subject of Miss Desmond's matrimonial arrangements; but Maude had been able to discover that her father's vexation was not a matter of the moment, to be forgotten and done with after the first surprise of the announcement. Lionel Hillary was tolerably gracious to Mr. Tredethlyn, but his manner towards Julia changed altogether. There were times when he scarcely took the trouble to conceal his displeasure from that young lady herself. He would sit watching her moodily when Francis Tredethlyn

was by her side, and would sometimes, when the conversation gave him an opening, break out into some cynical generality upon the husband-hunting propensities of modern young ladies. Francis was too simple-minded to comprehend the drift of these covert sneers; but Julia understood her benefactor, and defied him with her bold handsome eyes and her flashing teeth.

"He wanted thirty thousand a year for his daughter, I suppose," she thought, when she pondered on Mr. Hillary's discourtesy. "What grasping, avaricious creatures these rich people are!"

Christmas was approaching, and that festival period was to be spent at the Cedars, to which place Maude Hillary was tenderly attached, despite her sentimental talk about poverty and a simple home deep down in the heart of rustic England. The young ladies' portmanteaus had been packed ready for the departure from Brighton, and Maude and Julia only waited for Mr. Hillary to escort them on their homeward journey. He had not been so much with them during the last week or so of their sojourn; and as Francis

Tredethlyn only came backwards and forwards with Mr. Hillary, the girls had been left by themselves, with no better occupation or amusement than the reading of new books, the trying of new music, and a contemplation of the blusterous gray waves beating eternally before their windows: for the weather had been cold and stormy of late, and the delicious esplanade had been deserted; only an occasional masculine wanderer, out for a "constitutional," buffeted the winds and strode in dismal loneliness along the pavement beneath Mr. Hillary's windows.

It was only natural, under these circumstances, that the young ladies should have grown weary of Brighton. They had a close carriage at their disposal; but then driving through perpetual tempest is not particularly agreeable even in a close carriage. They went shopping in East Street two or three times during the severe weather, and bought expensive materials for impossible complications of Berlin-wool work and gold beads; and, experimentalising with the same on their return home, discovered themselves at sea in a wide ocean of

perplexity. Thus it was that they grew very tired of Brighton, and wished most earnestly for Mr. Hillary's coming.

"Oh for the silvery ring of my own Broadwood!" exclaimed Maude, as she rose from a struggle with a German rendering of "Polly, put the kettle on," in seven flats, and ten pages of double arpeggios. "I wonder *who* makes the pianos for houses that are let furnished? I'm sure they must all be made by the same man; and I suppose it's a theory of his own that makes him always use damp wood, and put so much flannel into his trebles.—I wish papa would come and take us home, Julia."

Miss Hillary expressed this wish at least twenty times in a day; and Julia echoed it, as if out of pure sympathy. But Miss Desmond was not a very sympathetic person, and she was really anxious to get back to the neighbourhood of London and Francis Tredethlyn. Nearly a fortnight had passed since the Cornishman had been to Brighton, and Julia was terribly conscious that the link which united him to her was very fragile, and might be broken

by any unlucky hazard—unless, indeed, his constancy were sustained by a chivalrous sense of honour. She had as yet had no opportunity of discovering his sentiments on this subject, and she had a vague idea that a small farmer's son, who had taken the Queen's shilling, would be unlikely to entertain the same splendid notions of truth and loyalty that glowed in the breasts of his superiors.

"I know that he's a very good fellow," Julia thought; "and I don't suppose he would steal any thing, or tell a deliberate falsehood; but I daresay he would think it no sin to throw me over at the last moment if—"

There was a point at which Miss Desmond's reveries always stopped short. She did not care to think about that which Francis Tredethlyn might like to do, even if he were free to do as he liked.

Mr. Hillary came home very late upon the evening of an especially disagreeable day. He came down to Brighton by the mail train, and arrived at the hired mansion just as the two girls

were gathering together the gold beads and Berlin wools, preparatory to going to bed. But though the merchant had been so much longer away than usual, he seemed in no particular hurry to embrace his daughter; for instead of coming up to the drawing-room, he walked straight to a dreary little study at the back of the house, which had been set apart for his use.

Maude had heard the sonorous knock at the big street-door, and flew out of the drawing-room to greet the traveller.

"At last, dear papa!" she cried. "We have been as dull and dreary as a pair of Marianas in a moated grange. Oh, you darling papa! I am so glad you have come! Please take us home to Twickenham: we've had *such* weather; we're as helpless and miserable as those poor working people who go about singing so dreadfully flat when there's a hard frost. 'We are two lonely single girls, and we've got no work to do!'" sang Miss Hillary, with the established nasal drawl, as she skipped down the stairs.

"Kiss me, you wet, cold, melancholy-looking

papa," she said, planting herself between Lionel Hillary and the door of his sanctum.

The merchant seemed in no very affectionate humour to-night. He put his daughter aside without looking at her. His face was fixed and stern in expression, and its gloomy rigidity was in no way relaxed as he spoke to Maude.

"Why are you up so late?" he said. "I thought you would have gone to bed an hour ago. I don't want to be worried to-night, Maude. I've some papers down here that want looking into, and I've brought other papers with me. I may have to sit up half the night, perhaps; and, remember, I am not to be disturbed."

"But you will be ill, papa, if you work so hard."

"I shall not be ill, and I know what is best for myself. I cannot and must not be annoyed to-night, Maude."

He went into his room, where the servant had already made an illumination that would have been enough for a chapel or a factory, by means of five flaring gas-burners; but Maude followed

him, and was not to be put off even by the harsh words that sounded so strangely in her ears.

"Papa," she remonstrated piteously, "I am sure that you are ill, or that something has happened."

Mr. Hillary laid his hand upon his daughter's shoulder, and put her out of the room,—very gently, but with a certain determination which was quite a new thing in his treatment of this idolised and exacting Maude.

"I tell you, once more, that I am going to be—very busy, and must not—be disturbed." He seemed tired, for the words came slowly, as if the mere utterance of them were a painful exertion. "Good night, my dear; go to bed, and sleep peacefully. God bless you, and take you into his keeping!"

His manner changed all in a moment as he said this, and he caught her suddenly to his breast and kissed her passionately, as he had done on that other day when they had talked of Francis Tredethlyn.

But in the next moment Maude found herself

standing outside the closed door of her father's retreat, amazed and unhappy. That sudden little gush of affection had been as perplexing to her as Mr. Hillary's unusual sternness of manner. It was all alike strange; and vague fears agitated her as she went slowly up-stairs to the big barren drawing-room, which looked very little more home-like than a first-class waiting-room at a railway station.

Julia had disappeared, and the flaring gas-lamps illumined a great barren desert of Brussels carpet and emptiness. Dear Julia always remembered that her good looks were her only dower, and took care not to waste them by late watching in the glare of many gas-burners. Maude sighed as she looked round the empty room, and then seated herself at a table adorned with a gaudy cover that looked like a small Turkey carpet. She took up the impossible Berlin-wool work, and the gold beads, and set herself to the task of counting tiny dots and squares on a coloured paper pattern, with a view to discovering where the Berlin wool left off and the beads

began. But she was tired and unhappy, and the bewildering dots and squares made her head ache; so she pushed away the work presently, and roamed restlessly up and down the room: now stopping by a table, and taking up a book, only to open it haphazard and stare blankly at the pages; now lingering by the piano, noiselessly fingering the notes, and tormented with a wild desire to dash into some blusterous march that should startle the slumbering household.

Her father had told her to go to bed. He was going to work very late, and must on no account be disturbed. He had worked late sometimes at Twickenham, but not often; and on those occasions Maude had gone to sleep happily enough, only a little disturbed by the thought of "poor papa" toiling over those cruel business documents. But to-night it was altogether different. At the risk of incurring her father's anger, Miss Hillary paced wearily up and down the desert of Brussels carpet, waiting till she should hear the merchant's step on the stairs, and know that his night's work was over.

She waited, oppressed by a vague uneasiness, and wondering why she was uneasy. Why was it that to-night the thought of her father's toil mingled with all manner of strange fears and misgivings? She was usually so frivolous, so apt to look brightly out upon the sunnier aspects of the world around her; but to-night her heart seemed like a leaden weight in her breast. What was it? why was it? The cheap French clock upon the chimney-piece struck some abnormal number between twelve and twenty, and a distant church-clock struck two; but still Miss Hillary waited in vain for that expected step upon the stair. Her father had said that he would be very late, but she had hoped that at the worst his work would be finished in a couple of hours. The time seemed so intolerably long to Maude Hillary, roaming in a purposeless manner about that big room, or standing in the bay-window to listen to the hoarse roaring of the waves, or sitting down to read for five minutes together, but never once knowing what she was reading.

There had been so few troubles in her life, and

looking back at the smooth sunlit ways by which she had wandered from childhood to womanhood, she was seized all at once with a fear that there must be some great grief in store for her. It was quite impossible that she could have altogether withheld herself from some contemplation of that startling question as to her right to be happy in a world where so many people were miserable; but the question had never intruded itself upon her so awfully as to-night.

"I have never had sickness, or death, or sorrow near me," she thought. "My mother died before I was conscious of her existence—as I think—and yet it seems strange that there can be any time when a child is unconscious of a mother's presence, or heedless of her loss. The worst trouble that I can remember is my parting from Harcourt, and I have always hoped that all would come right at last. But to-night—to-night I feel as if there had been something sinful in my happiness. The sermons I have heard at church never came home to me. I never felt that I was a miserable, sinful creature, groping my way upon a thorny path.

I'm afraid I have been very wicked; selfish and idle, vain and frivolous."

Looking back at her life, Miss Hillary saw an existence of Twickenham pleasure, water-parties, and picnics, Star-and-Garter dinners, perpetual Parisian bonnets, and turquoise bracelets, pet dogs, new novels, opera-boxes, and concert-tickets. Perhaps she had never before watched and waited alone at these still hours of the dead winter night, and these unusual thoughts may have been only the natural companions of her loneliness.

She looked at her watch a dozen times in an hour, and at last, when it was nearly three o'clock, her patience was exhausted all at once, and she resolved on going down to her father's room.

"He will be very angry with me for sitting up so late," she thought, "but I *cannot* go to bed until I have seen him. It will be better to see him ever so cross with me than not to see him at all."

Having once arrived at this determination, Maude Hillary ran down stairs and tapped lightly at her father's door. There was no answer, and she repeated that timid tapping. Again there was

no answer, and she tried the handle of the door, intending to steal softly in and surprise the merchant at his work. But the door was locked, and her breath grew thick with the sudden oppression caused by some vague terror. She lost all command over herself, and knocked loudly, calling in a frightened voice, "Papa! papa!"

It was not so strange that she should be frightened. How often she had heard of hard-working City magnates suddenly stricken down in the prime of life by some fell disease, unsuspected until that last fatal moment!

A heavy footstep inside the little room relieved her of these vaguely terrible fears. The door was opened, and Mr. Hillary stood before her very pale, very angry. "Maude! how absurd this is! What have you been doing? Why have you been sitting up?"

"Because somehow I *couldn't* go to bed while you were working down here, papa darling. I couldn't; I didn't want to worry you or disobey you; but I don't know what's the matter with me to-night. All manner of ridiculous things came

into my head, and I felt that I *must* see you before I went to sleep. Let me come in, papa."

She pleaded so prettily, looking up in her father's face with such tender devotion beaming in her own, that Lionel Hillary must have been something harder and sterner than the stoniest of mercantile men if he had been deaf to her pleading.

"Come in if you like, Maude," he said, with a weary sigh; "I am sorry that you disturbed me. I had very nearly finished my work."

The littered mass of papers that had been scattered on Mr. Hillary's desk when Maude had left him were gone now, and only a few neat little packets remained in their stead. But, placed conspicuously upon the desk, Maude perceived a big envelope with a great red seal, and lying near it a smaller envelope, also sealed.

The merchant had removed his neckcloth. He seemed to have been working hard, for big drops of moisture stood upon his forehead. A great basket near his chair was filled to overflowing with torn scraps of paper, and the shower of waste

had fallen far and wide, and lay like snow about the chair in which Mr. Hillary had been sitting.

"Now, Maude," he asked sternly, as his daughter followed him into the room, "what is it that you want with me?"

"Why, to see you leave your work and go to bed, papa. You don't know how late it is."

The merchant smiled a grim smile, and pointed to his watch which lay open on the desk.

"I've been working against time, and I've kept watch upon every quarter of an hour," he said.

"But you have finished now, papa."

"Not quite. I have very nearly finished—but not quite."

Miss Hillary shook her head with a pretty petulant gesture. She was not in the least afraid of her father's anger now. She had been so tortured by dim and shadowy apprehensions, that her spirits rebounded suddenly now that she was by her father's side, and she was bold enough to defy him.

"I sha'n't leave you any more to-night, papa.

If you had all the business of the Stock Exchange to transact, I wouldn't let you sit up any longer, ruining your health by brooding over those tiresome papers. Besides, your desk is quite clear, you seem to have done every thing."

"No, I have not done every thing."

Mr. Hillary had resumed his seat, and was staring absently at the desk before him, where all things looked so neat and orderly that Maude seemed justified in thinking that her father's work was done. There was a row of drawers on each side of the desk. One of them was open, and a bunch of keys hung from the lock. A copy of the *Times* newspaper lay across the top of this open drawer; but as Miss Hillary hung about her father, some portion of the silken flounces or furbelows of her dress brushed against the paper, and it fell rustling to the ground. Lionel Hillary turned suddenly with a look of alarm directed towards the open drawer, and Maude, following his glance, saw something lying among the neat packets of letters and papers,—something which had no business to be there; something which seemed to

realise a greater terror than any that her fancy had shaped, however dimly, during those hours of weary waiting in the room above.

The object which seemed so terrible to Maude Hillary was a pistol—a small pistol, of very modern fashion, fresh and bright from the hands of the gunmaker. Mr. Hillary was not a man who affected the gunsmith's art, and Maude had never seen such a weapon in her father's possession until to-night;—until *this* night, when vague fears respecting him had been so long busy in her brain, only wanting a form into which to shape themselves.

It seemed as if her frivolous girlhood left her all at once. It seemed as if that great terror, coming upon her with such ghastly suddenness, transformed her into a woman—a woman possessed of woman's highest attributes, fortitude and self-abnegation. She uttered no cry of alarm, no exclamation of surprise; but she suddenly closed and locked the drawer in which the pistol lay, and dropped the bunch of keys into her pocket. Then kneeling down beside her father's chair, she put

her arms tenderly about him, and laid her head upon his breast. Mr. Hillary had grown very passive all at once, and sat idly staring at the table before him.

"Papa," Maude said presently, in a low, pleading voice, "what is it? tell me, confide in me. In whom should you trust if not in me? What is it, papa? what does it mean?"

"It means—ruin!" the merchant answered, huskily. He did not turn towards his daughter, but still sat staring blankly straight before him. "It means failure and ruin, Maude; ruin in its worst shape, its most hideous shape."

"You mean that we shall be poor, very poor—that we shall have to leave Twickenham—that you will be a clerk perhaps in some office, and I a daily governess. I remember when the Gordons failed, and poor Constance Gordon and her brothers had to begin the world afresh, without money, and with very little help from their old friends. Do you think I could not bear as much as that, and be happy still, if you were with me? Ah, papa, papa, do I seem to you such a helpless,

useless creature, that you shrink from trusting me at such a time as this?" Hysterical sobs rose in her throat, but she stifled them, and went on talking to him in the same quiet tender voice, and caressing him as she talked. He submitted passively enough to her caresses, but he seemed scarcely conscious of them.

"Trust me, papa; tell me every thing. Such troubles as these seem so much less dreadful when once they have been freely spoken of. I remember when Mr. Gordon kept every thing hidden from his mamma as long as he could; and Constance told me that it seemed as if a great cloud was hanging over the house, and there was something in the atmosphere that stifled them all. But when the crisis came at last, they bore it bravely; and see how well they have got on ever since, in a most delightful way. Ah, papa, you have brought me up like a spoiled child, or a princess in a fairy tale; but now that trouble has come to us, you think I can't bear it. But I *can*, papa; if you will only be brave, your foolish, extravagant

daughter will learn to be wis[illegible] and patient. I was getting very tired of Tw[illegible]ickenham, papa; and shall be as happy as the [illegible]lay is long in a nice little cottage in some cheap [illegible] suburb, where I can have pupils."

Lionel Hillary ought no do[illegible]t to have been comforted by his daughter's t[illegible]rness; but unhappily there are some wounds [illegible]uell[illegible]inflamed, that the gentlest application the su[illegible]eon [illegible]au[illegible]evise is apt to chafe and irritate them. e[illegible]he [illegible]ir[illegible] talk jarred upon the merchant's mind, G[illegible]d it [illegible]ra[illegible] with a shiver of pain that he turned to l[illegible]er [illegible]il sl[illegible] left off speaking.

"Child, child!" he exclaimed, fret[illegible]full[illegible]g "[illegible] you don't know what you're talking of. D[illegible]o y[illegible]at th[illegible]ink it is such an easy thing to pass from o[illegible]as of the first positions in the City to a clerks[illegible]hip[illegible]ow[illegible]und a cottage in the suburbs? Do you think [illegible]rat[illegible]re is nothing *between* such opposite condition[illegible]ke Do you suppose I have only to shut up my [illegible]a[illegible]ooks, and wish my creditors good morning, [illegible]bo[illegible]s[illegible]e I walk out of my office! You talk and thin[illegible]k like a child, Maude. It is all very well for a[illegible]n old

twaddler like John Gordon, who suspends payment upon the first failure that affects his stability, and who winds up his affairs with a dividend of fifteen shillings in the pound, and the compliments and sympathy of all Basinghall Street. No one will sympathise with *my* fall, though more than I can count will suffer with me. I am not a man to drop under the first blow, Maude; for nearly three years I have been working a rotten ship, with the knowledge that nothing short of a miracle could save me from wreck. The wreck has come. The world will call me a dishonest man, because I waited for that miracle. I waited as the gambler waits at the green table, hoping that the last risk would bring me salvation. With me ruin means disgrace. I tell you, Maude, before the month is out, there will be a panic in the City, and men will cry out that Lionel Hillary is a rogue and a swindler. There's not a man who ever dined at Twickenham that won't use his knowledge of my home as a weapon against me. There's not a bottle of wine I ever gave a friend whose

price and quality will not be made a reproach against me. Oh! I know how people talk about these things. Go away, child! Your presence only goads and irritates me. It reminds me that I might have done better than I have done; I might have been wiser, I might have saved something—my good name at least. I have loved you so dearly, Maude,—Heaven only knows how dearly, for I am no man of big words or sentimental phrases. And now I leave you utterly destitute, the pauper child of a disgraced father."

"But you shall not leave me," cried Maude, with a sudden energy that startled Lionel Hillary. "Papa, why do you insist upon treating me as a child? Why do you judge me by what I have been, rather than by what I can be? Why won't you trust me? why won't you talk to me as if I were a son, and had a right to share your secrets? You have told me the worst, and you see I can bear to know it. I can endure even disgrace; but I cannot bear to lose you. Trust me, papa. I will be patient under any calamity except——"

She was seized with a sudden shiver[illegible]ring, and clung to him, with a convulsive force in[illegible] the small hands that entwined themselves about[illegible] his arm. "You know what I mean, papa," she s[illegible]aid. "Believe that I can bear any thing if you [illegible] will be true and brave and patient. And even yo[illegible] the miracle may come. Something may happen[illegible] at the very last, surely it may, to save your good[illegible] name."

Mr. Hillary pressed his daugh[illegible]ter's hand in acknowledgment of so much tend[illegible]rness and devotion; but he shook his head [illegible]moodily as he answered her, "Nothing *can* hap[illegible]pen to save me, unless twenty thousand pounds [illegible] drop from the skies between this and the 10th o[illegible] January."

Twenty thousand pounds! [illegible]Maude's thoughts flew to her jewel-case in obed[illegible]ience to the most universal of feminine instincts. [illegible]Twenty thousand pounds! Alas for that birthd[illegible]y gift of opals and diamonds, the turquoise rings [illegible] and bracelets, the emerald cross, the delicate pi[illegible]nk coral, and all the fragile fantastic toys of gol[illegible] and enamel, bought in the dearest market of eleg[illegible]nt West-end dealers,

who gives three years' credit. Maude, in all her ignorance, was wise enough to know that these things would not realise one of the twenty thousands required by her father.

"But there is Twickenham, papa," she said; "the Cedars must be worth ever so many thousands."

"And is mortgaged to the full extent of its value," answered Mr. Hillary. "Find me twenty thousand pounds if you can, Maude; but don't worry me with frivolous suggestions. I tell you that it is quite impossible for a woman to understand my position. God help me! I scarcely understand it myself. I only know that every thing round me is so much rottenness, and that the crash *must* come next month."

"But you will not think—of that—again!" urged Maude, pointing to the drawer.

"No; I'll wait to the tenth."

"For *my* sake, oh, papa, for my sake."

"No, child; not for your sake, but from a selfish, cowardly clinging to life," cried Lionel

Hillary, with sudden passion. "It would be better for you, ten times better, if I were dead. The thought of that was in my mind as I came down here to-night, until the noise of the engine almost seemed to thump out the words, 'Better for her, better for her.' People would have mercy upon you if I were dead, Maude; even those who suffered by me would be less bitter in their reproaches if I were dead. A man can only break his heart once; and when the man is dead, there is no mark for the arrows of justifiable reproach, or the foul garden-stuff and rotten eggs of malicious calumny."

"Papa, the help may come; the twenty thousand pounds may be found."

"No, child; there was only one hope of that, and the hope is gone."

For the first time that night Mr. Hillary looked at his daughter; she saw the look, an anxious scrutiny that sent a chill through her heart. She did not ask him what that one hope had been.

"Papa, trust in me, only trust in me!" she cried; "you do not know of what I am capable for your sake—for your sake. You don't know what I have suffered to-night, and how changed I am by that suffering. Hope for a miracle even, papa: keep things as smooth as you can, and between this and the tenth the twenty thousand pounds may be found. Only tell me one thing. You don't want any one to *give* you the money. If it were lent to you, you could repay it by and bye?"

"Yes; with sufficient time I could repay it."

"Then hope for the miracle, papa. Ah! you think me such a child that you are almost angry with me for telling you to hope; but the lion laughed at the mouse, I daresay."

Five minutes after this, Miss Hillary led her father to his room, and wished him good night, cheerfully enough, upon the threshold. But under that pretence of cheerfulness, cruel fears and perplexities were torturing her innocent heart. Ruin, dishonour, disgrace; the misery of many homes

besides that one household on the bank of the river,—all these terrors had come very suddenly upon the girl who only that morning had been impatient of the December weather and the dull gray sky.

She went to her room; but only to sit with the door open, listening for any sound in her father's apartment, which was next her own. She sat for nearly two hours shivering with cold, and then crept softly to her father's room and opened the door. The merchant was sleeping, peacefully enough to all appearance, for his breathing was tranquil and regular; so Maude went back to her room. It seemed the bitterest mockery to go to bed; but then Miss Hillary's maid would have been scandalised had she come at eight o'clock and found her mistress still watching. Alas, poor Maude; for the first time in her life she had to submit to that most cruel social penance, entitled "keeping up appearances." She went to bed; and though she seemed to hear every hour, and half-hour, and quarter of an hour chimed by the

church-clocks, she must have slept at some time or other in that brief remainder of the night, or else how should she have been tormented by those hideous dreams, in which she was always wading through black morasses and turgid waters, carrying in her arms a great bag of gold, which she vainly strove to convey to her father?

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